قرآنی افادات

Qur'ânic Teachings

A collection of lectures and speeches on various Qur'ânic themes by one of the greatest scholars of our times

MAULÂNÂ ABDUL HASAN 'ALÎ NADWÎ
rahmatullâhi 'alayh

TRANSLATED BY
MAULÂNÂ MAHOMED MAHOMEDY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The M. Hasanî Trust was established not very long ago. Among the goals of this Trust is that the books and writings of Maulânâ Muḥammad al-Ḥasanî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* [in whose name this Trust was established] be published. The first publication was his booklet entitled "The world is in need of that pearl even today". This booklet was simultaneously published in Urdu, Hindi and English and was well accepted. Through the bounty and favour of Allâh ﷻ, we have been blessed with the opportunity of publishing "Quranic Teachings" of Ḥaḍrat Maulânâ Abul Ḥasan 'Alî al-Ḥasanî an-Nadwî [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] which has been compiled through much toil and zeal by Maulânâ R. Aḥmad Ḥaqqânî Nadwî. May Allâh ﷻ extend the benefit of this book, accept the Trust and may He make all its efforts a source of reward. Âmîn.

'Abdullâh Ḥasanî Nadwî
Dârul 'Ulûm Nadwatul 'Ulamâ'
Lucknow
1 Muḥarramul Ḥarâm 1420 A. H.

CONGRATULATORY WORDS

اَلْحَمْدُ لله وَالصَّلاَةُ وَالسَّلاَمُ عَلى رَسُوْلِ الله ﷺ وَآلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَسَلَّمْ

This humble servant had the opportunity of perusing through the book "Quranic Teachings" which has been compiled by Maulânâ R. Ahmad Haqqânî Nadwî. This book actually contains excerpts from this humble servant's writings, propagational speeches, books, and booklets. Upon seeing all those hidden, concealed and scattered excerpts of my writings and speeches compiled in one place at the same time, I experienced the same joy which a person experiences upon finding a valuable possession that one has lost or which was hidden from one.

This endeavour, sound taste, valuation and choice of the compiler has surprised even this humble servant and pleased him greatly [despite this being excerpts of this humble servant's writings and speeches]. This is also a portrayal of the saying "wisdom is the found item of a believer". This book is in fact a conglomeration of this humble servant's hidden or scattered Quranic facts and Islamic teachings.

May Allâh maximize the benefit of this book and may He reinvigorate and rekindle many forgotten and neglected facts, admonitions and words of advice in the hearts and minds of the people. This is certainly not difficult for Allâh ﷻ.

Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî
Dâ'irah Shâh 'Alamullâh
Râ'î Bareilly
25 Dhul Hijjah 1417 A. H.

INTRODUCTION

Maulânâ Sayyid 'Abdullâh Hasanî Nadwî
Lecturer in Hadîth
Dârul 'Ulûm Nadwatul 'Ulamâ' – Lucknow

الحمد لله رب العلمين والصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين ومن تبعهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين. أما بعد!

The Glorious Qur'ân is a living and universal book. It contains guidance for every era, every generation and for all circumstances. This is a book which Allâh gave to Rasûlullâh ﷺ as a miracle. Allâh ﷻ gave miracles to all the Prophets wherein due consideration was given to the circumstances of time, the emotions and inclinations of the masses, and the restrictions and limitations of time and place. It is for this reason that those miracles are not present today. The previous divinely revealed books became prone to distortions. Jewish and Christian scholars and writers have themselves admitted this. However, the miracle which was given to Rasûlullâh ﷺ is such an eternal and fresh miracle that even today it is filled with life, and still has the capacity to lead and guide. It offers a wonderful solution for humanity's universal problems and difficulties. It is a mirror and a portfolio of life.

Maulânâ Sayyid Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* writes:

> "The Glorious Qur'ân is a miracle in its entirety, and also a miracle in its parts. In other words, every verse of the Qur'ân is a miracle. It is our firm conviction that the Qur'ân is a miracle. However, very few people realize that every single verse of the Qur'ân is a separate miracle. The Qur'ân displays its miraculous nature in different times and situations in such a manner that it is even disrespectful to compare it to the sun. It seems that it is the peculiarity of the Qur'ân that if you read it not once, not a hundred times but thousands of times, then it appears that it was revealed only today."

The Qur'ân is a filled treasure and a deep sea in which there is no dearth of pearls. If it is distributed among every single individual of the progeny of Âdam ﷺ there will be no shortage whatsoever.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî writes at another place:

> "If there is anything that could be given to the greatest of leaders and the wealthiest of people, if there is anything that could be added to their [authority and wealth], if there is anything that could change their world, if there is anything that could make their fortunes shine – it is the Qur'ân alone."

The Qur'ân has the ability to raise one from the depths of the ground to beyond the constellations and furthest stars. And as for those who do not practise upon it, it flings them onto their faces. It is this very Qur'ân that elevated the Arabs who were desert dwellers and nomads, who had no food to fill their stomachs and no clothes to cover their bodies to the heights of this world. It changed these camel drivers to world leaders.

"They were not guided themselves, yet they guided the entire world.

What was this that changed these ordinary people into Messiahs?!

It is this very Qur'ân which changed the Bedouin Arabs and nomads who were not even looked upon by the rest of the world, into world leaders. They trampled on the crowns of Caesar and Khusroes. And they sat on their thrones with such disregard that it was as though they were sitting on ordinary straw mats.

A person [Rasûlullâh ﷺ] spent a few nights in the cave of Hirâ', he gave birth to a new nation, he gave them a constitution and he established a government. His eyes were deprived of sleep for a few nights but his nation became eligible to sleep on the throne of Khusroes. The servants of this unlettered Prophet [ﷺ] took control of the throne of Caesar and Khusroes.

The Qur'ân turns soil into an elixir. As for he who does not value the Qur'ân, it reduces him to soil. This is the absolute law of Allâh ﷻ. It is a double-edged sword. If it is not used correctly, if it is not valued and appreciated, then nations are completely destroyed. The law of Allâh ﷻ is absolute. Every self-respecting law is absolute to a certain extent. The words of every honourable person are given due consideration and respect. Whenever governments promulgate laws, they have to be respected.

From the above extracts, it becomes clear that Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] studied the Qur'ân as a living book, as a book of guidance, in fact, as a personal book which is addressing him directly. He writes at one place:

> "I have studied the Qur'ân with this in mind: It is a living book and a talking album or mirror, in which individuals can also see their faces, nations can also see their appearances and the consequence of the progress and rise of nations, empires, and civilizations can all be seen in this Book."

He therefore gives the following words of advice to those who study and recite the Qur'ân:

> "The Qur'ân should be considered to be one's personal book. This is an eternal book. It is a heavenly book. But it is also my personal book. It is also my person guide. It also mentions my personal shortcomings and weaknesses. It points out my personal illnesses. Each person can search for himself in the Qur'ân. This will only happen if you consider it to be a living book. Or your personal book, and you have the yearning to reform your self. People will be reformed later. Try reforming yourself first."

In this way, the study of the Qur'ân enriched Maulânâ [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] with the limitless treasures of the Qur'ân. His studies under the great commentator of the Qur'ân, Maulânâ Ahmad 'Alî Lâhorî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, and his teaching of the Qur'ân for many years in Nadwatul 'Ulamâ' created in him this special taste for the Qur'ân. His expertise in Arabic language and literature increased this taste and inclination. Without this, it is extremely difficult to understand

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the subtleness and extensiveness of the Arabic language. He makes reference to this as follows:

> "I am an insignificant student of the Qur'ân. The fact of the matter is that the centre and fountain of all my thoughts, all my lectures and all my writings is my limited study of the Qur'ân. Whatever inspiration Allâh ﷻ gave me to write, and the crux of whatever I presented before the readers is all the result of the Qur'ân."

Those who had been benefiting from this limitless treasure and diving into the depths of this ocean were fully aware of this attribute of Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*]. On one occasion, Hazrat Maulânâ Muḥammad Ilyâs *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, the founder of the *tablighî jamâ'ah*, addressed him directly and said to him: "May the treasure of the Qur'ân be a source of blessing for you."

Many associates who had a taste for the Qur'ân and were fully aware of the meanings of the Qur'ân used to request to Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] to write a commentary of the Qur'ân. However, he was unable to fulfil this request of theirs. The probable reason for this was that the more conversant a person is with the greatness and magnitude of the speech of Allâh ﷻ, the more difficult it becomes for him to write a commentary of it. However, what Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] did do was that he commenced Qur'ânic lessons in the month of Ramaḍân. Many parts of the Qur'ân as explained by him have been recorded on tape. May Allâh ﷻ give him long life so that this could be completed. In so doing, a good form of the commentary of the Qur'ân could be prepared and presented to the readers.

It was in our minds for quite some time that the short sections of the Qur'ân which Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] spoke about or wrote about be gathered in one place. It is these sections which Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] spoke about in his unique style and from which he drew new points. Some of the verses are such that he repeated on several occasions.

However, each lecture has some new points and makes different references. If these are arranged in order, a beautiful bouquet can be prepared. It has been noticed that many a time very important points, many indispensable and essential instructions and teachings become concealed and are lost in newspapers, monthly magazines, booklets and voluminous books.

Our beloved friend Maulânâ Risâl ad-Dîn Ḥaqqânî Nadwî deserves our most blessed congratulations on whose shoulders this responsibility was placed. He undertook much toiling, effort, endeavour, and search in order to find the writings and speeches of Maulânâ [*raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*] in the different booklets, newspapers, magazines, lectures, etc. He also penned some of the lectures that were on tape. He then arranged this collection in a very systematic way. The themes are such that they can provide fundamental guidelines to the new generation. They contain an answer to the challenges of the new culture, they portray the *jâhilîyyah* of today and the past and provide a comparison between the two, the importance of beliefs and fundamental tenets is also given, and also teach us how to rectify our condition. In short, this is a beautiful bouquet which contains all types of flowers. It is a lighthouse which provides light to those who have lost their way and is a boon for those who have become a target of rational misguidance.

May Allâh ﷻ accept this effort of his and make it a source of benefit for everyone.

'Abdullâh Ḥasanî
Dâ'irah Shâh 'Alamullâh
20 Muḥarram 1418 A.H.

INTRODUCTION

Maulânâ Sayyid Muḥammad Râbi' Ḥasanî Nadwî
Rector - Dârul 'Ulûm Nadwatul 'Ulamâ', Lucknow

The Qur'ân is the last divine book which Allâh ﷻ revealed to His last Prophet, Muḥammad ﷺ. Allâh ﷻ destined that this book will remain till the resurrection without any changes and alterations to it. It will not be able to be altered and distorted like the previous divine books. Evil and wicked people will not be able to alter it as they did with great books like the Taurâh and the Injîl.

Since the Qur'ân was to come after the Taurâh and Injîl, the harms that were caused by the changes and alterations that were made to them could not remain. This is because these harms were to be removed by the authentic religion and Sharî'ah brought by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the Qur'ân. Since no Prophet was to come after Muḥammad ﷺ and no book was to come after the Qur'ân, Muḥammad ﷺ was made the Prophet forever – till the resurrection – and the Qur'ân was made the reliable and authentic divine book till the resurrection. In this way, the Sharî'ah that is derived from these two sources [the Qur'ân and the Sunnah of Muḥammad ﷺ] is to remain eternal. And the religion [Islam] that is derived from these two sources is to remain eternal. Since they are to remain eternal, there remains no possibility of any changes, alterations or destruction in them. Through these two sources, man will continue to be able to learn the true religion and the true Sharî'ah. No one will have the opportunity of saying that the true religion and the true Sharî'ah were not before them. Thus, this religion is not only preserved and of use till the day of resurrection, but each and every part of it is exactly as it was over 1400 years ago. Our ṣalâh is the same which the Ṣaḥâbah ﷺ used to offer and which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had taught them and demonstrated to them. The fasting is the same which he kept and which he taught. In like

manner, the others forms of worship are in the same form as they were in the first era of Islam – as taught by Rasûlullâh ﷺ, as practised by him and as emulated by the Ṣaḥâbah ﷺ. Thereafter, those who saw the Ṣaḥâbah ﷺ followed in their way and so did those who came after them.

Îmân, character, morals, attributes of the believers, attributes of the unbelievers and hypocrites, etc. that are mentioned in the Qur'ân are exactly as they were during the time of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. These are read and understood exactly as they were in the past. In the light of this absolute protection and absolute existence [of the sources of Islam], if there is any change in the the different aspects and actions in Islam after this lengthy period of time, then it is only in the difference in the sincerity of our intentions and our passion for our îmân. This is an aspect which can differ from person to person. Based on this, the stronger a person's îmân and the more passion he has for his Islam, the more acceptable his acts of worship will be. The less it will be, the more unacceptable his acts of worship will be.

The different ways of worship were established from the very first era in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ân and the Ḥadîth. These were seen in the actions of those who practised on these teachings. The latter generations saw the previous generations and acted in like manner. The teachings of the Qur'ân and the Ḥadîth ensured that they remain in the correct way of action.

The effect of the Qur'ân and Ḥadîth remaining forever is that the entire religion of Islam is in tact with all its details. This is a peculiarity of the religion of Islam alone. No one religion today is existing in its original form. This is because there is no book of any other religion that is existing as it was from its very beginning in order to check that the religion remains intact in its original form.

INTRODUCTION

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Rector - Dârul 'Ulûm Nadwatul 'Ulamâ', Lucknow

The Qur'ân is the last divine book which Allâh ﷻ revealed to His last Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ. Allâh ﷻ destined that this book will remain till the resurrection without any changes and alterations to it. It will not be able to be altered and distorted like the previous divine books. Evil and wicked people will not be able to alter it as they did with great books like the Taurâh and the Injîl.

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manner, the others forms of worship are in the same form as they were in the first era of Islam – as taught by Rasûlullâh ﷺ, as practised by him and as emulated by the Sahâbah ﷺ. Thereafter, those who saw the Sahâbah ﷺ followed in their way and so did those who came after them.

Îmân, character, morals, attributes of the believers, attributes of the unbelievers and hypocrites, etc. that are mentioned in the Qur'ân are exactly as they were during the time of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. These are read and understood exactly as they were in the past. In the light of this absolute protection and absolute existence [of the sources of Islam], if there is any change in the the different aspects and actions in Islam after this lengthy period of time, then it is only in the difference in the sincerity of our intentions and our passion for our îmân. This is an aspect which can differ from person to person. Based on this, the stronger a person's îmân and the more passion he has for his Islam, the more acceptable his acts of worship will be. The less it will be, the more unacceptable his acts of worship will be.

The different ways of worship were established from the very first era in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ân and the Hadîth. These were seen in the actions of those who practised on these teachings. The latter generations saw the previous generations and acted in like manner. The teachings of the Qur'ân and the Hadîth ensured that they remain in the correct way of action.

The effect of the Qur'ân and Hadîth remaining forever is that the entire religion of Islam is in tact with all its details. This is a peculiarity of the religion of Islam alone. No one religion today is existing in its original form. This is because there is no book of any other religion that is existing as it was from its very beginning in order to check that the religion remains intact in its original form.

Together with this importance of the Qur'ân that it guarantees the existence of Islam till the resurrection, it enjoys the other importance of being the speech of Allâh ﷻ. Apart from the Qur'ân, there is no other book that is protected in its original form. Every other heavenly book has been altered and changed. It was then translated from one language to another. And then from the second language to a third language, and so on. It is a known fact that a translation cannot convey the original language in its full. In like manner, the sanctity of the being [Allâh ﷻ], whose speech was translated does not remain as it does in the original.

However, the Qur'ân is a book which is the speech of Allâh ﷻ Himself. Allâh ﷻ expressed it in the words of humans so that they may benefit from it, so that man may understand it and convey it in his language. Since it is the speech of Allâh ﷻ, it enjoys that lofty position and status of greatness and sanctity which is appropriate to it. Its lofty position is described in the following manner:

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ، هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ

"This is a book in which there is no doubt. It is a source of guidance for those who choose righteousness."

Allâh ﷻ says at another place:

لاَ يَمَسُّهُ إِلاَّ الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ

"None but the purified may touch it."

Allâh ﷻ says at another place:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِيْ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ...لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

"We revealed it in the night of power...the night of power is better than a thousand months."

Allâh ﷻ revealed His sanctified book for the guidance of people and sent it in the words of humans because words are

the only way of making humans understand. Words are those sounds which express certain specific meanings and connotations. These sounds are referred to as the words of their languages. The words of the language of the Arabs are their special words which are described as the Arabic language. The Qur'ân was revealed in these words of theirs.

In order to make people understand the different objects of life, it becomes necessary to know the words by which these objects are fulfilled. Man uses the words of his language in order to convey whatever he needs to, in order to express his state and condition, in order to refer to a particular matter, in order to express his feelings, etc. In order to teach man and make him understand, Allâh ﷻ revealed His book in the words of humans. Since the first addressees of this book were the Arabs, He revealed His speech in the Arabic language. They were made to fully understand the meanings of the words in which the Qur'ân was revealed. Had it not been the speech of Allâh ﷻ, they would not have been able to understand it very well. Those who understand the Qur'ân and make others to understand it can only do so according to how well they understand the meanings of its words.

Maulânâ Sayyid Abul Hasan 'Alî Hasanî Nadwî [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] possessed a very high level of understanding the words of the Arabic language. When explaining the verses of the Qur'ân, he expounds on some of the words in such a manner, that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân comes to the fore. We also come to learn the relationship between a condition and the word that is attached to it, and which has a great relevance with the psychological condition of man. This peculiarity of Maulânâ [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] is such that it is found in very few scholars.

This peculiarity of Maulânâ [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] is found in many of his lectures and writings when commenting of

Together with this importance of the Qur'ân that it guarantees the existence of Islam till the resurrection, it enjoys the other importance of being the speech of Allâh ﷻ. Apart from the Qur'ân, there is no other book that is protected in its original form. Every other heavenly book has been altered and changed. It was then translated from one language to another. And then from the second language to a third language, and so on. It is a known fact that a translation cannot convey the original language in its full. In like manner, the sanctity of the being [Allâh ﷻ], whose speech was translated does not remain as it does in the original.

However, the Qur'ân is a book which is the speech of Allâh ﷻ Himself. Allâh ﷻ expressed it in the words of humans so that they may benefit from it, so that man may understand it and convey it in his language. Since it is the speech of Allâh ﷻ, it enjoys that lofty position and status of greatness and sanctity which is appropriate to it. Its lofty position is described in the following manner:

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This peculiarity of Maulânâ [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] is found in many of his lectures and writings when commenting of

different verses. These explanations of his are full of meaning, reflective and heart-rendering.

Acting under the guidance of Maulânâ 'Abdullâh Hasanî Nadwî, Maulânâ Rasâl ad-Dîn Nadwî selected such themes and lectures in which different verses were explained by Maulânâ [*rahmatullâhi 'alayh*] in his intellectual style and insight into the Arabic language and literature. In so doing, Maulânâ Rasâl ad-Dîn Nadwî has fulfilled a very important task which portrays the spirit of Islam and the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân in a very effective way. May Allâh ﷻ accept it and bless him in this effort. Âmîn.

Muhammad Râbi' Hasanî Nadwî
25 Dhul Hijjah 1420 A.H.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

The study and understanding of the Qur'ân should not be restricted to the limited criteria of time. This is because time comes and goes. The methods of thinking and pondering also change. The value and importance of things are also not stable – they rise and fall. If a particular philosophy is born in a particular time, or a particular definition or connotation is laid down [in a particular time], it is not necessary that the very same philosophy or definition be totally applicable in the next era or in the next generation.

The Qur'ân is a divine book. It is independent. It possesses its own personality. The entire treasure of human sciences and all their philosophies are similar to the ever-moving sand dunes of the desert – they are scattered and spread out, and they also get together and increase in size. It is not possible to place the foundation of anything upon them. How, then, can it be correct to say that the Qur'ân falls from its lofty, heavenly position and its own strong and eternal foundations and is an embellishment for these flimsy and unstable hills of sand?!

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*

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The background to my study of the Qur'ân

All praise is due to Allâh ﷻ. We praise Him, seek His assistance, and place our trust in Him. We seek refuge in Allâh from the evils of our selves and from our evil actions. The one whom Allâh guides, none can lead astray. And him whom Allâh misguides, none can guide. We testify that there is none worthy of worship but Allâh. He is alone, He has no partner. We testify that Muḥammad is His servant and His messenger. May Allâh send salutations upon him, his family and his companions. May He bless them [all] with abundant peace.

أَعُوْذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيْمِ بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

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The Qur'ân removes one from difficulties and comes to one's assistance in every situation

Among the eternal miracles of the Qur'ân is that it removes one from difficulties and comes to one's assistance in every situation. I experienced this on numerous occasions that I had to deliver a lecture and I was unable to decide on how to commence my speech and what I should say today. [However], once the *qârî* commences his recitation, I realize that these verses are directed towards me before everyone else and that these verses have been selected for me. I also experienced this during my foreign travels that due to my occupations the entire day and moving from place to place [the entire day], I do not get the opportunity to ponder over the subject upon which I have to deliver my speech – at times the topic is specified to me while at other times it is not specified. [In the latter situation], I leave the matter in the hands of Allâh ﷻ that He will guide me when the time comes. This is because whatever comes from Him is known as *wârid* by the *'ârifîn* (those who have truly

recognized Allâh ﷻ). In other words, a very honourable guest who has arrived. A person's will and choice has nothing to do with it.

The commencement of my intellectual life through the study of the Qur'ân

I consider it appropriate to introduce myself that I am an insignificant and junior student of the Qur'ân. My intellectual life commenced with the study of the Qur'ân. I have written at several places that Allâh ﷻ blessed me with a teacher who was endowed with both, a taste of faith and a taste for the Qur'ân [referring to Shaykh Khalîl ibn Muḥammad Yamânî]. He used to recite the Qur'ân and cry [profusely]. The first effect which fell upon me was his voice which was engulfed with fear – this was my good fortune, and this is also the essential nature of the Qur'ân.

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their Meccan life and the reins of power may slip from their hands.

This is the essential nature of the Qur'ân that it ought to be recited with fear; it ought to be recited with the sweetness of îmân. The following is stated in a Hadîth: (الإيمان يمان والفقه يمان والحكمة يمانية). It is my good fortune that the first teacher whom I was bestowed with was soft-hearted and possessed a fearing heart. We were always remorseful that he should recite the Qur'ân for a long time so that we may listen. He used to lead the morning prayer in our district mosque. Very rarely was he able to complete a chapter. No sooner he commenced his recitation, he was overcome by weeping and his voice would become hoarse. This was his daily practice. He taught me some chapters of the Qur'ân. He specifically taught me some chapters concerning the concept of *tauhîd*. He commenced with Sûrah Zumar. Eventually a time came when lessons devolving around language and literature superceded [everything else] and I was preoccupied in this. However, the taste of the Qur'ân which I had came to the fore from time to time and continued having an effect on me.

When my studies came to a completion, I developed a desire to study the Qur'ân. I studied more than what is normally taught at the *madâris*. I then went to Lahore where I studied the entire Qur'ân under the tutelage of Maulânâ Ahmad 'Alî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. Even here, the thing which impressed me the most was his Quranic life – which is referred to as a "talking Qur'ân". One could perceive a purity in his heart. His abstentious life, dervish way of life and practising on the Sunnah had such an effect on my heart that it could be referred to as *barakah*. I also spent some time at Dârul 'Ulûm Deoband. I requested Maulânâ Husayn Ahmad Madanî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* to give me some of his time so that I could present certain verses of the Qur'ân before him which he could explain to me. These verses were

such that I perceived some confusion about them and could not solve this confusion by merely reading the books of *tafsîr*. Maulânâ Madanî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* was one of the senior scholars of his time. Apart from being a scholar of different sciences and of Hadîth [of which he was an accepted authority], he had a special taste for the Qur'ân. The colour of the Qur'ân had enveloped his life and temperament. He had set aside Friday's for me. I remember myself choosing those verses which I could not solve [and presenting them before him]. Maulânâ used to travel a lot and it was also the time of action [against British rule in India]. Despite all this, I was still able to benefit from him.

Maulânâ Sayyid Sulaymân Nadwî and the sciences of the Qur'ân

Apart from the above, I also had the opportunity of listening to the explanations and lessons of some of the verses of the Qur'ân delivered by Maulânâ Sayyid Sulaymân Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. It is my conclusion that I have not come across anyone with such in-depth knowledge of the Qur'ân as Maulânâ Sayyid Sulaymân Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. This is a historical discovery. People know him as a historian and biographer. They know him as a theologian. However, it is my opinion that his rank as regards the understanding of the Qur'ân is so high, that not only in India, but also in the Indo-Pak subcontinent I have not come across someone whose study of the Qur'ân was so wide and deep. The reason for this extensive study is that he made a wide and deep study of the Arabic language, literature, rhetoric and miraculous nature of the Qur'ân. I then remained in the company of Maulânâ Hamîdud Dîn Farâhî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* (who was considered to be an authority in this science). I benefited tremendously from listening to his talks, his research and his study of the Qur'ân. I remember that we once went to Dârul Musannifîn. He conducted a lesson on Sûrah al-Jumu'ah. I have not heard such an academic and such an intellectual

lesson which was filled with fine points. If only that lesson had been recorded.

I thus had a brief opportunity of benefiting from Sayyid Sulaymân Nadwî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. When I was appointed as a teacher at Dârul 'Ulûm Nadwatul 'Ulamâ', I was specifically entrusted with teaching the Qur'ân. There are two methods of teaching the Qur'ân at Nadwatul 'Ulamâ'. The first is that the actual text of the Qur'ân is taught. This method was most probably initiated at Nadwatul 'Ulamâ' and was later followed by other institutes. This is also the correct method – that is, the text of the Qur'ân is placed before [the students] and taught to them without any interference from any book of *tafsîr*. The teacher should prepare himself and present whatever he studied. I was thus given the opportunity of serving the Qur'ân for several years. I had also taught *tafsîr* but my major time was spent in teaching the text of the Qur'ân. The most important subjects and themes that were entrusted to me were *tafsîr*. The reason for introducing myself in this manner is that you may realize that I am a junior student of the Qur'ân. Thereafter, whatever Allâh ﷻ blessed me with – the major portion of all that is the Qur'ân.

Those who have read my writings and books would realize that all my writings have been prepared from the Qur'ân. I took the most assistance from the Qur'ân and then from history. And I consider history to be an exposition of the Qur'ân.

The miraculous nature of the Qur'ân

If we are rich, then it is through the filled treasures of the Qur'ân. If some pearls come into our hands through the study of the Qur'ân, we can present them to you. These are sufficient to be given to humanity and the entire progeny of Âdam ﷺ.

If there is anything that we could give to the greatest of leaders, the richest and most affluent of people, if there is anything which could add [to their status and wealth], which could change their lives, and which could cause their fortunes to glitter; then it is their need for the Qur'ân.

The Qur'ân has the ability to raise one from the depths of the ground to beyond the constellations and furthest stars. And as for those who do not practise upon it, it flings them onto their faces. It is this very Qur'ân that elevated the Arabs who were desert dwellers and nomads, who had no food to fill their stomachs and no clothes to cover their bodies to the heights of this world. It changed these camel drivers to world leaders.

"They were not guided themselves, yet they guided the entire world.

What was this that changed these ordinary people into Messiahs?!

It is this very Qur'ân which changed the Bedouin Arabs and nomads who were not even looked upon by the rest of the world, into world leaders. They trampled on the crowns of Caesar and Khusroes. And they sat on their thrones with such disregard that it was as though they were sitting on ordinary straw mats.

A person [Rasûlullâh ﷺ] spent a few nights in the cave of Hirâ', he gave birth to a new nation, he gave them a constitution and he established a government. His eyes were deprived of sleep

for a few nights but his nation became eligible to sleep on the throne of Khusroes. The servants of this unlettered Prophet [ﷺ] took control of the throne of Caesar and Khusroes.

The Qur'ân turns soil into an elixir. As for he who does not value the Qur'ân, it reduces him to soil. This is the absolute law of Allâh ﷻ. It is a double-edged sword. If it is not used correctly, if it is not valued and appreciated, then nations are completely destroyed. The law of Allâh ﷻ is absolute. Every self-respecting law is absolute to a certain extent. The words of every honourable person are given due consideration and respect. Whenever governments promulgate laws, they have to be respected.

The study of the Qur'ân and the etiquette thereof

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"Allâh chooses whomever He wills and guides whoever turns to Him." (Sûrah ash-Shûrâ, verse 13)

The act of choosing is specific while guidance is general

Two things are mentioned in this verse. One is the rank of choosing and the other is guidance. As regards choosing, Allâh ﷻ explicitly said: "Allâh chooses from His Messengers whomever He wills." The entire matter is in the hands of Allâh ﷻ. He can choose whomever He wills and bestow upon him the rank of acceptance and being chosen. However, guidance is something that is required by all humans. "[He] guides whoever turns to Him." He gives guidance to those who turn to Him and those who are in search of guidance. The one who has developed the qualities of turning [to Allâh], of humility, of servitude, and considering oneself to be absolutely nothing; then Allâh ﷻ places such a person onto the path and conveys him to [his destination]. However, the prerequisite is that the quality of "turning to Allâh" has to be found in such a person. I wish to elaborate on this aspect of "[He] guides whoever turns to him."

There are two aspects to the Qur'ân. One is the educational and propagational aspect. In other words, the beliefs which every individual has to have faith in, fully comprehend, and to deduce from the Qur'ân. As regards this aspect, the Qur'ân proclaims:

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ

"In a clear Arabic language."

The Qur'ân proclaims this in more explicit terms:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ

"We have made the Qur'ân easy in order to derive admonition. Is there anyone to derive admonition [from it]?"

A person cannot remain a polytheist after reading the Qur'ân

If a person wants to know what Allâh ﷻ requires of him, what the prerequisites for his guidance are, what the Qur'ânic ideal with regard to the oneness of Allâh, messenger-ship and the hereafter is, what Qur'ânic faith is, and what the essence of receiving guidance in this world and salvation in the hereafter is, then the Qur'ân is easy for him. No one can offer the excuse of not being able to understand the Qur'ân or that the Qur'ân is not a proof for him. As regards *tauḥîd*, the most clear, absolute and powerful thing that can be said about it is found in the Qur'ân. Upon reading the Qur'ân, a person can become anything but a polytheist. I am openly proclaiming that he can lack in deeds, he can choose the path of transgression; but when it comes to the relationship between *tauḥîd* and polytheism, then the Qur'ân is as clear as the sun. What is the sun? It is a thing in which there is no possibility of any doubt concerning it. As regards the belief in prophet-hood – what is prophet-hood? What are Prophets? What responsibilities have been placed on their shoulders? What orders are issued to them? What do they teach? What type of lives do they live? How pure and exalted are their lives? All this is clearly explained in the Qur'ân. They speak and identify themselves [in the Qur'ân] and also remove doubts and misgivings [concerning themselves]. Read Sûrah al-A'râf, Sûrah Hûd, Sûrah ash-Shu'arâ' – the Prophets are mentioned by name and each one is introduced [to us] and [the prophet-hood] of each one is verified.

The Qur'ân is easy for the purpose of guidance

The Qur'ân is easy for the purpose of guidance. There is no doubt anywhere in it. As for the sciences contained therein and the high and intricate themes contained therein, we cannot claim that whatever we have understood thereof is correct and that all other interpretations are wrong. It is extremely dangerous to hold an opinion about the Qur'ân which is different from everyone else and which is rare. Abû Bakr ﷺ says:

أي سماء تظلني وأي أرض تعلني إذا قلت في كتاب الله ما لا أعلم

"O Allâh! Under which sky will I take refuge and on which earth will I walk if I were to say something about any verse of the Qur'ân regarding which I have no knowledge."

This was the general stand of the Sahâbah ﷺ with regard to the Qur'ân. 'Umar ﷺ himself used to ask the meanings of certain words. He then used to address himself saying: "May your mother be bereft of you 'Umar! What is there if you do not know the meaning of one word?"

The attitude of the Sahâbah ﷺ indicates that they neither considered it possible nor necessary to master every verse of the Qur'ân. Forgive this boldness of mine. And that is, the essential spirit of the Qur'ân, its essential call, and its essential object has to be acquired. Our relationship with it has to be that of respect and humility. Despite our not knowing the reality of many things, we have derived maximum benefit from them. If a person does not know the reality and import of the Qur'ân, even if he does not know the entire meaning of words, but he has the fear of Allâh in his heart, the awe of Allâh in his heart, when the Qur'ân is recited his condition is like that as described by Allâh:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللهِ

"Had We revealed this Qur'ân to a mountain, you would have seen it smashed into smithereens out of the fear of Allâh."

The condition of such a person is that his hairs stand on end, he trembles, and his heart begins to tremble. He says: "This is the speech of Allâh. This is the speech of my Sustainer." It is possible for such a person to reach the highest stages of guidance and to acquire proximity with the Qur'ân.

It is mentioned in a Hadîth that some people will be such that they will recite the Qur'ân with much formalities but it will not go beyond their throats. Therefore, as far as the themes of the Qur'ân are concerned, I can say, as a student of the Qur'ân, that it is such an ocean that one cannot reach the depths of it. The greatest of people were left trembling before its wide expanse and he would realize that he could never take a step without the guidance and inspiration fortune bestowed to him by Allâh.

Knowledge is from Allâh

The first thing to realize is that knowledge is from Allâh. This is bestowed upon hearts which are filled with His fear, with awe for His speech, and with respect for Him. Knowledge is transmitted to them from Allâh ﷻ. The second thing is that the Qur'ân should be recited in optional salâh and the person should imagine that it is being sent to his heart at that very time. He should thus derive enjoyment from this and try to lose himself therein. The Qur'ân cannot be subjected to one's intellect whereby one could derive one's personal meanings from the Qur'ân through one's intellect.

The third thing is that whatever meanings come to your mind while studying the Qur'ân, you should say: this is what has come in my faulty understanding and this is how it has come into my understanding. Never ever make the claim that till

today no one has understood the Qur'ân. It is only I who has understood it. This is absolutely incorrect. I said and wrote this several times that if we were to say that the Qur'ân was unable to be understood in the last thirteen hundred years, then this is a very serious allegation. The Qur'ân itself says:

لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ

"In a clear Arabic language."

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ

"Surely We revealed it an Arabic Qur'ân so that you may understand."

And today you claim that for the last thousand years, for the last thirteen hundred years no one really understood the meaning of so and so word! This would mean that the benefit of the Qur'ân remained sealed for so many days!!!

In a concluding speech at a seminar in Aligarh Muslim University I had said: intellectuals do a particular research and present it saying: in the light of whatever research and study I made, my opinion is this...I have come to this conclusion. However, it is incorrect for a person to insist in claiming that his conclusions are 100% correct and that all differing conclusions are wrong.

With regard to the Qur'ân it is said that its originality and freshness will never become outdated, and that there is no end to its wonders. Therefore, even if you are given a lifespan like that of Nûh ﷺ [1050 years], and that time is spent in pondering over the Qur'ân, new meanings will open before you every day. Bearing in mind our limited lifespan, our limited capabilities and resources, to make this claim that the Qur'ân was not understood till now is a very serious error.

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My personal book

The final thing is that the Qur'ân should be regarded as one's personal book. It is a book of guidance, it is an eternal book, it is a heavenly book, but it is also my personal book. It is also my personal guide, my personal weaknesses are mentioned therein, it makes reference to my personal illnesses as well.

Every person can do some soul-searching in the Qur'ân. This will only happen when you consider it to be a living book or consider it to be your personal book. And that you have the desire for your personal reformation. People can be reformed later on – first ensure your personal reformation.

The way of the Prophets was that first they should be guided and then they could say something to others. Many of us read the Qur'ân so that it may be a source of evidence for us, others may be put to shame, and a proof may be established against others. On the other hand, the Sahâbah ﷺ used to read the Qur'ân for their personal reformation. They would read one verse and begin practising upon it. At times, Sûrah al-Baqarah would be completed after several months.

These few facts were in my mind as a student of religion. I have presented these before you. We should endeavour as much as we can in the field of:

يَهْدِيْ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيْبُ

"He guides to Himself the one who turns to Him."

Allâh will convey whom He wills to the rank of *ijtibâ'* (of being the choses servant of Allâh ﷻ). We are not responsible for that. Our duty is to study, our duty is to acquire guidance, our duty is to make ourselves, and our duty is to bring a revolution in our lives. The Qur'ân is with us in order to guide us and to convey us to our destination. We have to have the urge for guidance, we have to perceive our need, and we have to admit our lack of resources. All this together is known as

inâbah – turning towards Allâh ﷻ. You make *du'a'* and I will also do the same.

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّيْنَ

The message of guidance

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً قَالُوْا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ. قَالَ إِنِّيْ أَعْلَمُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰئِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُوْنِيْ بِأَسْمَاءِ هٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ قَالُوْا سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ. قَالَ يٰآدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَّكُمْ إِنِّيْ أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُوْنَ.

"When your Sustainer had said to the angels: 'I am appointing a deputy on earth.' The angels replied: 'Are You going to place on earth a deputy who would cause corruption therein and who would shed blood? While we attest to Your purity and sanctity while praising You and extolling You?' (Your will is free from evil and Your works are free from loss.) Allâh said: 'The reality of the thing to which My sight is on – you have no knowledge thereof.' (When the will of Allâh displayed whatever it willed) and Âdam (progressed to such a metaphysical level that) he learnt the names of all things through the instruction of Allâh, then Allâh presented (all those realities) before the angels and said: 'If you are correct (in your misgivings) then tell Me what the name is of all these (realities)?' The angels replied: 'O Allâh! All purity and greatness belong to You alone. We only know that which You taught us. Knowledge is only that which You have, and wisdom is only that which You possess.' (When the angels admitted their incapability in this manner), Allâh ordered: 'O Âdam! Now you tell the angels the names of all those (realities).' When Âdam told them all the names, Allâh said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth? And that I know whatever you expose, and that whatever you hide is also not concealed from me?'" (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verses 30-33)

We all read this conversation which is mentioned in the Qur'ân and which took place between Allâh and the angels. When Allâh ﷻ decided that he will make the father of humanity, Âdam ﷺ, His deputy in this world and give him auhtority in this world, then in order to place him in the right direction, in order to unify and organize the different powers of the universe, in order to make this universe purposeful and this life meaningful, in order to establish a relationship between man

and Allâh ﷻ, in order to pave the way for brotherhood and cooperation amongst mankind, in order to utilize the bounties of Allâh in accordance with His commands and teachings – when He decided to create such a human then the angels said: "we attest to Your purity and sanctity while praising You and extolling You." Weren't Your servants and slaves good enough for this task? We are engaged in glorifying and sanctifying You all the time!

Allâh ﷻ replied: "You shall soon learn how appropriate and suitable the place is which I am choosing for this creation [man]." Âdam ﷺ and the angels were then put through a test. First Âdam ﷺ was instilled with the names [of things], made aware of them, taught their capabilities and strengths, taught the manner of utilizing them, and Allâh instilled in him the ability to perceive their necessity [to humans]. He was instilled with such strength that he could easily establish a relationship with them and thereby be able to utilize them.

Âdam ﷺ was first taught the names and then these things were presented before him. He identified them correctly. When they were presented before the angels, then in accordance with their rank, they admitted that their knowledge was limited to what Allâh taught them and that they only have knowledge of their responsibilities.

قَالُوْا سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ

"The angels replied: 'O Allâh! All purity and greatness belong to You alone. We only know that which You taught us. Knowledge is only that which You have, and wisdom is only that which You possess.'"

Allâh ﷻ thus proved that the deputy whom He appointed in order to benefit from this world and the being whom He chose is most correct and qualified.

A thought provoking conversation

The Qur'ân has quoted a very meaningful and thought provoking conversation which took place at the time of Âdam's ﷺ creation between the angels and Allâh ﷻ. This conversation commenced in the following way:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

"When your Sustainer had said to the angels: 'I am appointing a deputy on earth.'"

Allâh then said:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ الْحُسْنَى

"Allâh taught Âdam the names of all things."

We learn from this that whatever necessary knowledge man received of this world, the relationship which he has with this material life, and whatever strength and abilities he was given in order to derive benefit from this life and this universe; all this was given to him as a result of being the deputy of Allâh. And that all this was given to him to be utilized as Allâh wills and not as he wills. And that all this is a result of this vicegerency that was given to him instead of the angels. The Qur'ân subtly refers to this concept:

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ

"Spend of that wealth which He made you a deputy." (Sûrah al-Hadîd, verse 7)

The Qur'ân regards this divine vicegerency to be a great responsibility which demands justice, mercy, and severe introspection. There is no need to show the difference between vicegerency and free will. A deputy is always in contact with his master and always obedient to him. He fulfils the trust of his responsibility, he sees to the well being of his subordinates, he is grateful to his owner and master, and always attributes all virtue and kindness to his master. He is not caught in the web

of pride and haughtiness. Nor does power and rule remove him from his masters control.

However, the west has forgotten this fact. The result of this is that, not only in the history of knowledge and research, but in entire human history, the biggest mistake came to the fore. This was not the mistake of a single person, a few persons, or the mistake of a particular thinking or philosophy. Rather, it was the mistake of the entire intellectual world and international powers in whose hands were the future of humanity and the inclinations of the world. This was therefore a very wretched mistake and a very serious negligence and ignorance that appeared on the stage of history. This was a mistake that created a lengthy chain of mistakes. An intellectual has correctly said: "I have not seen a greater mistake committed by the human race." The world is still paying the consequence for this deviation from the straight path which Allâh ﷻ laid out for intelligent humans through the Qur'ân [by narrating to man the conferring of vicegerency and the bestowal of knowledge to Âdam ﷺ].

The basic point of these verses is that man is the deputy of Allâh in this world. He is not originally from here nor does he hold an original position. Rather, he is the deputy of Allâh and he came to this world in fulfilment of Allâh's command.

When man realizes that he is the deputy of Allâh, he has to know what the command of Allâh is. This is learnt through the Prophets and the books with which they came. He has to create those qualities within himself. That Allâh is the Sustainer of the worlds, He is extremely merciful and kind, He is just and forbearing, He is extremely beneficent and most merciful. Man should therefore use the Allâh-given knowledge in accordance with His all-encompassing sustainership, His complete mercy and His perfect justice.

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If this knowledge is used for vile and Satanic purposes, this would entail treachery with the purpose and grand status of "divine vicegerency" and disloyalty and disobedience to our forefather inheritor [Âdam ﷺ].

The Prophets and Messengers are the only means of guidance

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ هَدَانَا لِهٰذَا، وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْ لاَ أَنْ هَدَانَا اللّٰهُ، لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ.

The Qur'ân says that the fortunate ones who reached paradise made a very truthful statement: "All thanks are due to Allâh who caused us to reach here [in paradise]." In this statement of theirs, they explained a great fact: We could not have reached this high status [through our personal intelligence and intellect, through any intellectual mastery, and through our personal search and endeavour] if the mercy and guidance of Allâh had not been with us.

We who reached here did not do so through our intellect and intelligence, we did not reach here through the path of experience, we did not reach here through training and endeavour, nor did we reach here through the path of philosophy and logic. The dwellers of paradise firstly said this in general terms: "We would not have reached here had Allâh not conveyed us here."

They then explain this fact by saying that Allâh does not come down to earth in order to guide each person individually. He does not take each person by the hand and convey him to the path. Rather, He has different ways of guiding people and He has a particular way of doing this. What is this way? "The Messengers of our Sustainer came with the truth." In other words, the means of this is the commissioning of the Prophets, their guidance and their leadership. It is they who come to this world with the message of Allâh ﷻ, the provisions for guidance and salvation, and the way to the final destination. And it is tney who place the lost humanity and the deviated souls onto the straight path and convey them to their eventual destination.

Had the envoys and ambassadors of Allâh ﷻ not come with the truth, we would have remained wandering aimlessly and our destination would have been some place other than paradise.

We should never forget that the thing that has made us worthy is not derived from the intelligentsia, the philosophers, the politicians or the scientists. It is derived from the Messengers. The means to this worthiness can be nothing but prophet-hood and messenger-ship and those bearing this responsibility [the Prophets and Messengers]. If we accept this, then we are worthy of benefiting and receiving a portion of those bounties, pleasures and truths created by Allâh ﷻ and conveying the same to others.

Whether we are propagators or conveyers [of Allâh' message], whether we are exponents or interpreters of the religion [of Allâh], we should always bear this in mind that we have derived this religion and this call from the Prophets. Had the Prophets not come with this call, we would not have even got wind of it.

These perfect guides and envoys of Allâh ﷻ are the Prophets and Messengers who have been coming to this world for the guidance of humanity. It is they who have been conveying the lost souls, and the perplexed and wandering caravans of humanity to Allâh ﷻ in their respective times and eras and making them eligible for paradise. It is solely through them that the correct cognition of Allâh ﷻ, knowledge of the purpose of creation, and the correct path of living life can be achieved. This is because this is the only path of the correct cognition of Allâh ﷻ - which is safeguarded from ignorance, deviation, misunderstanding, and incorrect expression.

The truth of the matter is that apart from the path of the Prophets, there is no other path to the cognition of Allâh ﷻ. Neither can the intellect guide one in this regard, nor can intelligence alone be of any avail, nor knowledge and art, nor

soundness of thought and good temperament, nor sharpness of mind, nor deductive thought, nor experience.

Allâh ﷻ has expressed this reality on the tongues of the dwellers of paradise. These dwellers of paradise who are true in their speech and also speaking from personal experience. Moreover, this is not the situation of incorrect expression nor exaggeration. They therefore made this announcement first:

وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلاَ أَنْ هَدَانَا اللهُ

"We would not have reached here had Allâh not conveyed us here."

They then expressed and attested to this reality that the means to this guidance are solely the Prophets and Messengers:

لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ

"Without doubt, the Messengers of our Sustainer had come with the truth."

It is learnt from this that it is solely through the commissioning of the Prophets that it was possible for them [dwellers of paradise] to acquire the correct cognition of Allâh ﷻ, to learn of that which would earn His pleasure, to learn of His injunctions, to act upon His injunctions, and thereby make it possible for them to enter paradise.

There is a great chapter of the Qur'ân called Sûrah as-Sâffât (in which the deviation of the polytheists, their incorrect beliefs, and their attribution of certain things to Allâh ﷻ which are in conflict with His grand status are refuted) Allâh ﷻ ends this chapter in the following words:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ وَسَلاَمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ وَالْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

Whatever they describe [as regards Allâh], your Sustainer who is the possessor of power, is pure from all that. Peace upon the Messengers. And all praise is due to Allâh, the Sustainer of the worlds. (Sûrah as-Sâffât, verses 180-182)

These three verses are the rings of a golden chain that are connected to each other. When Allâh ﷻ cleared Himself from the baseless and foolish statements of the polytheists, He placed the completion of this task on the shoulders of the Prophets who made the perfect sanctity of Allâh ﷻ conspicuous and expounded His correct attributes. Allâh ﷻ sent peace upon them and praised them. This is because they are responsible to correctly describe the Creator and His correct attributes to the creation. Their commissioning is a great favour upon the creation, the greatest bounty upon humans, and a far reaching demand of Allâh's divinity, mercy and wisdom. It is for this reason that He completed this chain by saying:

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

"And all praise is due to Allâh who is the Sustainer of the worlds."

Even now, the path of guidance and salvation is in following the Messengers. And from now till resurrection, this is in following the teachings of the seal of all Messengers, Muhammad ﷺ, in following his *Sunnah* and in adopting his noble ways.

The message of the Qur'ân

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ

"Do not be like those people who forgot Allâh so [Allâh] made them such that they forgot themselves."

Man has the greatest relationship with himself. The nucleus and centre of all man's inclinations are his own self. If you have to look deeply, the one whom he loves is also for his personal self. He also loves the one who loves him. As for the one whom he dislikes, even if he possesses thousands of good qualities, mans heart will not be attached to him. Life's entire activities, walking and turning, running about are all for the sake of this love. Wherever he goes, he will find a portrayal of this. Beneath every love, he will see the wonderful attraction of this intrinsic love. Everything of this world can be given up, man can become neglectful of and preoccupied from everyone, but at the most critical moment he does not become neglectful of his own self. At the time of difficulty when one's children, relatives, friends and beloved are all given up, man thinks about himself and worries about his own welfare. This is a reality. It is witnessed daily. It is a peculiarity of human nature. If someone makes a claim contrary to this, everyone is alarmed. Does man really forget himself, does he really not concern about himself and worries about everyone else? Does he really become unconscious about himself while he is conscious of everything else? Does he really concern about the entire world while he is neglectful of his own self? Does he really love the entire world while he has no love for his own self? Moreover, all this is not for some great purpose! It is not based on certain principles or ideologies! It is not due to the spirit of self-sacrifice! Rather it is merely due to being in a world of self-abandonment and due to an intellectual plague!

These three verses are the rings of a golden chain that are connected to each other. When Allâh ﷻ cleared Himself from the baseless and foolish statements of the polytheists, He placed the completion of this task on the shoulders of the Prophets who made the perfect sanctity of Allâh ﷻ conspicuous and expounded His correct attributes. Allâh ﷻ sent peace upon them and praised them. This is because they are responsible to correctly describe the Creator and His correct attributes to the creation. Their commissioning is a great favour upon the creation, the greatest bounty upon humans, and a far reaching demand of Allâh's divinity, mercy and wisdom. It is for this reason that He completed this chain by saying:

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The message of the Qur'ân

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Forgetting Allâh causes one to become forgotten

The Qur'ân makes this very claim. It says that forgetting Allâh causes one to become forgotten himself. When man forgets Allâh ﷻ he finds that he is forgetting himself. Self-abandonment overtakes him. Being engrossed in the world increases. It is appears that the entire world is revolving around man while man is seen to be revolving around and circuiting something else. His goals and purposes become invisible to him while the means become the actual goals. He develops such a direct inclination towards things that his personal self comes out from in-between. This results in such an abnormal condition that all his perceptions are finished off. Enjoyment and comfort that had always been the major goals in this world now disappear from the mind. Man gradually becomes deprived of this. Perception of this deprivation and sorrow over it are also no longer present. Imaginary things take the place of genuine and factual things and human life remains a conglomeration of marvels. All this happens at that time when man begins to worship himself instead of worshipping Allâh ﷻ, and when he is prepared to reject everything but himself. However, the more this forgetting of Allâh ﷻ and rebelling against Him progresses, the more self-abandonment, self-enmity and suicide increase.

The applicability of this verse so clearly and lucidly was probably not so visible in any era as it is in this era of culture and progress. Man's engrossment in his personal affairs and his preoccupation with his self was probably not found in any era to the extent to which it is in this era. The means of enjoyment and comfort were probably not invented in any era as they are in this era. The philosophy of self-worship and self-aggrandizement was probably not laid out and promoted in any era as it is being done in this present era. The inclination and zeal of rejecting everything but one's own self was probably not so rife as it is in present society. However, what is the fact

of the matter? And what is it that is being witnessed day and night? Is it not that man is most heedless of the real issues of his life? Is it not that he is most neglectful of his destiny? Is it not that he is most unconcerned about himself? He is most deprived of enjoyment and comfort. His share of the treasures of life is the least. He has been left with a coin machine without being able to derive any benefit from those very coins that he inserted into the machine. His share in life is only this much that he be given sufficient oil to enable the machine to work. Other than that, he is a machine devoid of emotions and perceptions, deprived of enjoyment and pain, unaware of happiness and hardship.

He is left totally engrossed in his 24 hour occupation, going around in circles receiving water and fodder from his master and going around in circles without any complaint or protest. In his preoccupation with progress and society, man is also going around aimlessly in circles. He is bound to the norms of civilisation and restricted to the values of society. He earns for others, clothes himself for others, and receives a wage or ration to uphold his life. He has been turned into a porter who runs around from one place to another in this huge factory of this world. He bears burdens, drives the vehicle of civilisation and receives a little wage for it. [In the meantime] he is deprived of true pleasure and happiness, wholesome food, pure air, delight of the soul, tranquillity of the heart, cognition which gives peace of mind, and the pleasure of endeavour. The current of life is flowing swiftly and the circuit of civilisation is moving at such speed that he does not even have the time to ponder over his problems and issues. His body is so worn out, his mind is so fatigued, his thinking is so preoccupied, and his heart is so dead that he does not even perceive this deprivation and stupefaction of his. He is flowing away like a blade of grass in a current and he is like a rider who has no control over his animal. The

animal is controlling him. "Neither are the reins in his hands nor are his feet in the stirrups."

The punishment of forgetting Allâh ﷻ, which is causing oneself to become forgotten, is extremely admonitory. Hundreds and thousands of individuals, entire nations, and huge kingdoms are prone to this self-abandonment and sacrifice. It is an intellectual plague that has engulfed the entire world. Despite this, the eyes are not opening to it. Instead of the call to Allâh consciousness, the call to being heedless of Allâh is increasing. The flags of rebellion against Allâh ﷻ are raised everywhere. The more the call towards self-worship, the more self-abandonment is increasing. The bounties of this world and the pleasures of the heart and soul are disappearing. The goals and purposes are being removed and people are made to be engrossed in the means. Wealth was supposed to have brought comfort. Wealth remained while comfort has been snatched away. It has been snatched away in such a manner that no sign of it can be found anywhere. People have started filling this vacuum with wealth. Foods and medications have increased while health has been snatched away. Swift vehicles and means of transportation where invented to provide comfort and ease. Now, speed alone is the object while comfort has been lost. When natural difficulties were removed, regulatory and unnatural difficulties were automatically created and imposed upon us. When travel became easy, the purpose of the journey became difficult. Previously it was difficult to go from one place to another. Now the journey has become easy but the destination and the course of the journey is frightening and terrifying. Previously it was difficult for a person of one city to converse with another person of a different city. Now it is easy to converse but there is no attraction and fascination in the conversation. Love has vanished, people have become callous and apathetic. Personal motives have taken over from every direction. Therefore, how can the heart feel any happiness when

conversing with someone? Previously, people living in remote and far away lands craved to hear voices. Now, despite hearing voices they are unconcerned and forced to hear the lies and propaganda of the radio. In short, the baseness of purposes or the incorrect manner of utilising them has also made these means and instruments useless. In fact, they have made them a burden to one's life and an unavoidable calamity. Human life has been left meaningless, aimless, spiritless, joyless, tasteless and heartless.

This is the message of the Qur'ân that self-abandonment is the result of abandoning Allâh ﷻ. The only cure for this is cognition of Allâh ﷻ and a quest for Allâh ﷻ. There is now the need to go back instead of fleeing, love and affection instead of enmity, affirmation and belief instead of rejection, peace and reconciliation instead of defiance, obedience and submission instead of rebellion, and running towards Allâh ﷻ instead of running away from Him.

فَفِرُّوْا إِلَى اللهِ إِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ

"So hasten towards Allâh. I am certainly a warner from Him to you."

"Read the Qur'ân with understanding and practise upon it with the heart. Kill yourself in the pleasure of truth and become the beloved of Allâh ﷻ."

The door to the understanding of the Qur'ân

In the light of these intellectual experiences, I now have this to add…the actual door of understanding the Qur'ân only opens when a person converses with the writer of this speech via this speech without any human barriers. The way to this is excessive recitation of the Qur'ân, optional prayers or remaining in the company of the pious servants of Allâh ﷻ - servants who are truly imbued with the delight of this Book and have a true understanding of it. And in whose veins and muscles this speech has embedded itself. It is necessary that the reader acquires a direct knowledge and affinity to this Book and that he perceives that he is being directly addressed. A poet has rightly said:

"As long as this Book does not descend into your conscience,
neither can Râzî[1] nor the author of *Kashshâf*[2] solve your difficulty."

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*

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[1] This refers to Shaykh Fakhrud Dîn Râzî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* – a great commentator of the Qur'ân.

[2] This refers to the name of a commentary of the Qur'ân. The author of this commentary is Allâmâh Zamakhsharî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*.

CHAPTER TWO

PROPAGATION AND DETERMINATION

"The propagation of *dîn* is a very delicate task and there is no limt to its extensiveness. It has certain geographical and certain durational limits. And both these are extremely broad and spread out. When considering its duration, then this commences from the time a Messenger commenced his call or when a non-Messenger started his propagation. As to its end, there is no end to it. In like manner, its geographical borders cannot be laid down. It is possible that the propagator is in the east and it is also possible that he be in the west. It is also possible that he moves from the east to the west or vice versa. Therefore, if he is only acquainted with the manner of addressing the people of the east, he cannot fulfil the task of teaching and guiding the people of the west. And if he is only acquainted with the nature and psychology of the people of the west, then his propagation in the east will be neither conducive nor fruitful."

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*.

The principles and etiquette of *da'wah*

اُدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

"Invite to the way of your Sustainer with wisdom and with kind admonition." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 125)

The fact of the matter is that the principles and regulations of *da'wah* cannot be delineated. It is connected to human understanding and intelligence, human inclinations and emotions, and circumstances and society. Among the words of the Arabic language for which there are no alternatives or synonyms in any other language is the word *hikmah*. You can write a voluminous book explaining this word. This word would encompass all explanations and commentaries: according to one's understanding, according to one's capability, according to society, according to the environment, according to the area, according to one's temperament, according to one's inclination and emotion, according to contemporary demands and requirements, according to the importance of the subject, according to the intellectual capability and psychology of the addressee, according to the latter's thought processes and beliefs…in other words, the word *hikmah* includes everything that is necessary and inevitable in order to convince someone of what you are saying.

I was delivering a lecture at a place. I was requested to expound on the principles and regulations of *da'wah*, its limits, and its orbit. And to lay down its themes and terminology. I replied by saying that this request is similar to that person who employed a worker. He then made a list of all the tasks that were to be carried out by the worker and handed the same to him. One day, his master was mounting a horse. The moment he placed his foot into the stirrup, his foot slipped and he was close to falling to the ground. He then called out to his worker to help

him. From a distance the worker showed him the list of tasks and said to him, where is it in that list that when you slip from the stirrup while mounting a horse, I must assist you? The principles and regulations of propagation are similar to this in that we cannot limit and specify them in words. We are the servants and slaves of the Creator of the universe. Whatever the need may be, in whichever field the religion of Islam is needed – fulfilling this need is known as *da'wah* (propagation).

However, it is necessary to be versed with the history of *da'wah*, its goals and purposes. Studying the wise methodology of the Qur'ân and Hadîth is also extremely necessary. Together with this, the achievements of the reformers in Islamic history, their *modus operandi* and methodology should also be known. For example, I shall mention one story from the Qur'ân which sheds much light on principles and etiquette:

"Two youths also entered the prison with him [Yûsuf]. One day one of them said to him: "I saw in a dream that I am pressing wine." The other said: "I saw in a dream that pieces of bread are placed on my head and birds are eating therefrom." Both of them said: "Interpret these dreams for us. We see you to be a pious person." Yûsuf replied: "I will give you the interpretation of these dreams before the food which you normally get reaches here. This knowledge [of interpreting dreams] is of those sciences that my Sustainer bestowed upon me. The fact of the situation is that I have left the ways of those who do not believe in Allâh and who reject the hereafter. I have followed the way of my forbears, Ibrâhîm, Ishâq and Ya'qûb. It is not for us to ascribe anything as partner to Allâh. This is actually a favour upon us and upon all humans [that He did not make us servants of anyone other than Him]. However, most people are ungrateful. O companions of the prison! You think for yourself, are many differing gods better or one Allâh who is superior to everyone? This what you are worshipping other than Him are nothing but a few names which you and your forefathers have named. Allâh has sent down no mandate for them. Absolute authority is for none but Allâh. He has ordered that you worship none but Him. This is the absolute straight path of life. But most people do not know." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verses 35-40))

Da'wah, wisdom and admonition

The Qur'ân has explained the method of *da'wah* of Yûsuf ﷺ in a very eloquent and erudite manner. It shows how he

fulfilled the task of propagation in the prison with such caution, wisdom, sagacity, proper understanding of the situation and making full use of the circumstances. We shall now mention the gist of this *da'wah*.

The first question that arises is that how did he make this *da'wah*? In its miraculous and wise way, the Qur'ân has captured this entire scene. An explanation of this is that when a person purchases some goods from someone, he first of all chooses an appropriate place so that he may be at ease and there may be no fear of being deluded or cheated.

Secondly, the task must be completed quickly. For example, if a person has to purchase some medication and the pharmacy is about to close. The person reaches the pharmacy at that time and requests the medication. The pharmacist replies that he should come tomorrow as he is unable to serve him today. This person will never go to that pharmacy again. The reason being that the sick person is about to die. He is in dire need of that medication. What will he do with that medication tomorrow [when he requires it today]? It is a matter of life and death, and no playing matter. Therefore, the task has to be completed at its appropriate time.

Thirdly, the specified time should also be acceptable. The reason being that it is necessary to create peace of mind. If a customer goes to a shop and the shopkeeper tells him that if you do such and such task for me, I will supply you the goods. Or, come after four hours because I have to meet a certain person. When you come thereafter, I will supply you the goods. In such a situation, the customer will flee from there.

Fourthly, the person should not suffice with the thing that is requested or asked for. Instead, he should also add a few useful things if that is possible.

Fifthly, he should remove or eradicate the shortcomings of the questioner. For example, we went to the doctor to get

medication for flu. However, we also have some other ailment which we are unaware of. It is now the duty of the doctor that together with the medication for flu, he should also treat the other ailment and clearly say [for example]: Mister! The lines on your forehead indicate that you have high blood pressure, or your face shows that you have a kidney problem.

You will not find the points which I referred to above in the commentaries of the Qur'ân. These can only be learnt after a deep study and strong attachment to the Qur'ân. If, after reading the above mentioned verses in which this incident of Yûsuf ﷺ is mentioned, a person embraces Islam, then this will be the exact demand of the eloquence of the word of Allâh ﷻ. Ponder: two persons came for an interpretation of their respective dreams. They must have been certainly satisfied with his religiosity, trustworthiness, knowledge, awareness, virtue, and expertise. They must have certainly realized that he belongs to another world. They may have not been conversed with prophet-hood, but they must have certainly seen and perceived the effulgence, holiness, innocence and purity that is on the countenance of a Prophet. The second thing we learn is that a propagator should be such that hearts should spontaneously incline towards him. And that he should also pay particular attention to those who come to him. The two prisoners enjoyed and were attracted to Yûsuf's ﷺ speech, and the latter also inquired about them. The third thing we learn is that the propagator must be of some standing and must have his own personality. A salient feature of his is that the moment people look at him they must turn their attention towards him. He has to maintain his rank at all times.

The sixth thing is that the moment Yûsuf ﷺ entered the prison, all the prisoners realized fully well that he was not a criminal. He was certainly innocent and that he was wrongly imprisoned. This is because jailers can merely look at the colour of a face and say who is a habitual criminal and who is innocent. This is

a psychological thing. One glance at Yûsuf ﷺ must have made them admit in their hearts that he was a righteous person.

Seventhly, they asked him for an interpretation and he complied. Now how did they know that he was a knowledgeable and practical person? How did they know that he could interpret dreams? We will therefore have to accept that they must have certainly conceived this after looking at his outward condition and appearance. In those days there were no records stating the details [educational and otherwise] of the prisoner.

The distinction between good and evil

In every era Allâh ﷻ placed this strength in man, even though he may be the most ignorant or the most ignoble, that he is able to distinguish between good and evil. It was the science of physiognomy whereby these people concluded that this [Yûsuf ﷺ] was not a criminal. They therefore clearly stated:

إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"We see you to be a pious person."

Even this word has very wide and deep meanings in the Arabic language. Included in these meanings are: a person of perfection, a person of rank and beauty, a person of nobility and gentility, a high-ranking person, etc. From this we learn that it is also necessary to know that a certain item is obtainable from a certain shop. It should not be that you go to any and every shop without knowing what items are sold there. If you do so, you will only embarrass yourself.

The second thing is that every single situation does not demand humility and modesty. If a person converses with you on an academic topic and you merely reply in the affirmative to everything he says without saying anything [or making any contribution], he will consider you to be an ignorant person.

The prisoners had asked Yûsuf ﷺ for the interpretation of their dreams only. However, he showed them the level of his knowledge, and the extent of his intellect and understanding by saying:

قَالَ لاَ يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلاَّ نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا

"I will give you the interpretation of these dreams before the food which you normally get reaches here."

In other words, I possess the thing which you need and require.

A lesson on the oneness of Allâh ﷻ

Another point to bear in mind is that had Yûsuf ﷺ wanted, he could have set aside a particular time and asked them to come after some time. However, he took full advantage of the situation just in case he does not get such an opportunity again. The propagator should therefore consider it a boon to be able to fulfil the religious need of others immediately. Yûsuf ﷺ then mentioned food because in the restricted and difficult life of prison, food is something that is greatly desired. This was a psychological statement. The prisoners must have certainly experienced some peace of mind and tranquillity from this statement. Some commentators have stated that Yûsuf ﷺ said to them that he would inform them of what food they will receive even before it comes. Adding to this, another commentator states that the reason why he was able to do this was that he had been made in charge of the kitchen. However, the fact is that the pronoun in the word تأويله refers to the dream and not to the food. The delicacy of the situation demanded that he say with just pride that he can interpret their dream with his own intelligence, aptitude, discernment and acumen. And that he has crossed many such hurdles. What is so great about this one? However, he said no such thing. Instead of intimidating them with his intelligence and acumen, he gave them the true

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lesson of *tauḥîd* and delivered a lecture on the oneness and purity of Allâh ﷻ and on the fact that Allâh alone is the creator and the sustainer. This lecture of his was so comprehensive that only a voluminous book in this regard will be able to do justice to it.

For example, he did not speak ill of their gods nor did he choose a negative approach. Instead, he chose a positive approach and said:

ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ

"This is what my Sustainer taught me."

He was neither ambiguous nor did he make any attack against anyone. Secondly, he did not tell them that this was given to him by his brothers, uncles and forefathers. That his family is an intellectual and religious family. That it was solely through their training that he is able to interpret dreams to them. Instead, he handed the entire affair to Allâh ﷻ and said:

ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِيْ إِبْرَاهِيْمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ

"This knowledge [of interpreting dreams] is of those sciences that my Sustainer bestowed upon me. The fact of the situation is that I have left the ways of those who do not believe in Allâh and who reject the hereafter. I have followed the way of my forbears, Ibrâhîm, Isḥâq and Ya'qûb." This is a positive approach. He mentioned these names because the people of that time were most probably conversant with them since before. They must have certainly heard of these people and they must have certainly been respecting and honouring them. Yûsuf ﷺ then rejected greatness and high status for himself and said that all this is solely through the favour of Allâh ﷻ. The Qur'ân conveys this in the following words:

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ

"This is actually a favour upon us and upon all humans [that He did not make us servants of anyone other than Him]. However, most people are ungrateful."

Thereafter, Yûsuf ﷺ took advantage of the situation and said:

يَا صَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

"O companions of the prison! You think for yourself, are many differing gods better or one Allâh who is superior to everyone?"

The fact is that Yûsuf ﷺ surmised that if this belief of his becomes exposed and the king comes to know that he holds a new religion and a new belief, and that he is also teaching it to others, then the outcome of this will not be too good. He therefore spoke to them in a very personal and confidential tone and addressed them as "O companions!" Apprehension of this nature does not contradict the grand status of prophet-hood.

At this stage, his *îmân* and his acumen guided him to stop because there was a danger that both these prisoners may become perturbed, that they may become bored and say to him: "We merely came to ask you for your interpretation of our dreams and not to listen to a lengthy lecture. As it is we are feeling disturbed after listening to the interpretation and we have not even eaten our food as yet. Therefore do not impose upon us your lengthy lecture." Bearing in mind these psychological sentiments, Yûsuf ﷺ shortened his speech.

The reality of the situation is that as regards *da'wah*, there is a limit to everything: how long must the topic be, how much of history it must contain, how much of flavour should language and literature have, how much of clearness and simplicity should there be? There is a stipulated quota for each of this. If a Prophet and the son of a Prophet does not bear these factors in mind, who will do so? All those who are engaged in the task of inviting towards Islam should bear all this in mind.

The methodology of *da'wah*, the *modus operandi*, wisdom, and manner of speech are all found collectively in these Qur'ânic verses.

The true religion and the call of Islam

A skyscraper and an evergreen tree

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلاً كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِيْ أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِيْنٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ.

> "Have you not seen how Allàh set forth a parable? A good word like a good tree whose root is firmly established and whose branches are in the sky. It produces its fruit in every season by the order of its Sustainer. Allàh sets forth the parables for the people so that they may reflect." (Sùrah Ibràhìm, verses 24-25)

If any religious effort is made in any country or in any era, if the work of teaching the religion is done anywhere, if the work of inviting towards Islam is done, if the work of presenting the beauties and attractions of Islam is done, if the work of removing people from the dangers of this life and of the hereafter is done – then the present verse fully portrays the picture of all this.

This verse thus encompasses place and time. The basis and fountainhead of it is also included. The point of its ascent and the heights to which the Islamic call can reach are also included.

Ponder over the reality of one tree: "like a good tree" – the first condition is that it be a good tree. This is the precondition laid down by Allâh ﷻ for any task or work to be successful. Irrespective of how great the intelligence, how lofty the goals, how unreserved the means, how big the organization, how big the movement, how much the intellectual and technological resources – all these are not taken into consideration by Allâh ﷻ. It is necessary that the purpose be correct, the stimulus and motivation be correct and the call itself be correct. Allâh ﷻ says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلاً كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً

"Have you not seen how Allâh set forth a parable? A good word like a good tree."

The word has to be good

The first condition is that the word has to be good. A word itself is not sufficient. This has been an ongoing major error in this world: the history of literature, the history of poetry, the history of intelligence and wisdom, the history of Greek philosophy and logic all show that people have considered a word to be sufficient. That there has to be a word. This word has to portray the intelligence of man, it has to applaud a theme, it has to portray the depth of man's research and it has to have the power of expression. This is what has been by and large stressed in this world. You may go and study all the literature of this world and you will see that stress has been laid on "a word" and not on "a good word".

So the first condition is that the word has to be good. The purpose behind it has to be correct. It is not sufficient for it to be merely eloquent and well-expressed. Some people have considered this to be sufficient. If you were to study the history of religious psychology and the history of different propagations, you will find that at many places people considered a word to be sufficient. It may be uttered tactfully but is it good in itself, is its relationship good, has it been derived from the Creator of the universe, has it been obtained through His inspiration and guidance, has it been taken from the heavenly Scriptures, has it been derived from the teachings of the Prophets – or does it merely have the eloquence and articulacy of man, his power of expression and his alluring poetry?

Hundreds and thousands of things could have been used to give an example of a good word – pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, flowers, fruits, etc. However, in order to portray the

fruit-bearing, fruit-laden and eternally beneficial nature of a good word, there can be no better example than a good tree. A precondition for a tree is also that it should be a good tree. You cannot plant a margosa tree and expect to get mangoes from it. You cannot plant thorns and expect flowers. The tree itself has to be a good tree just as a word has to be good. Allâh ﷻ thus praises it as being "a good tree".

Now look at the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân: Allâh ﷻ says:

أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

"whose root is firmly established and whose branches are in the sky"

If you were to ponder over the expansiveness and subtleness of these words, you will conclude that everything has been said in them. The history of divinely revealed religions is included, the history of the Prophets and Messengers and their endeavours is included, the history of spiritual changes and revolutions [which has not been encompassed till now and which is difficult to encompass] is included. Not only hundreds and thousands, there must be millions of examples of the speech of the sincere servants of Allâh ﷻ whose record we do not have with us.

So this tree has to be such that its root has to be firmly established in the ground while its branches are conversing with the sky. A word will be uttered from the mouth of a single person but it will change the destiny of entire nations, it will change the direction of that era, it will change the way of thinking and nations upon nations will enter the true religion.

A word that emanates from the heart is most effective

An example of this has just now come to my mind. I offer it to you now. You may think that of what benefit is just one small word? Let me say this to my learned friends that mere study, mere intelligence, adopting the best mode of expression,

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلاً كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً

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A word that emanates from the heart is most effective

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choosing the best words, writing very well and mere oratory are not sufficient. It is necessary that the word emanates from the depths of the heart. Today you see that Islam has spread throughout the world and that it achieved numerous victories. A major factor in realizing all this was that whatever emanates from the heart is most effective.

Qaliq[1] Taymûr was a prince from one tribe of the Tartars. The land of Kashghar was under his rule. The Tartars invaded Turkistan and Iran in the 7th century A.H. and 13th century C.E. They then went on to invade Baghdad. They struck every brick of this city and shook the very foundation of the Islamic world. It now seemed that Islam will no longer exist as a force. One tribe from the Tartars [the Tartars were divided into several tribes] ruled over Turkistan and Iran. One of the princes who was to be the next in line to rule – who had not been crowned as yet and who would have ruled over this entire area after being crowned – went out hunting one day. There were patrols assigned in all directions so that no outsider could enter the area wherein the hunt was to take place. An Iranian saint by the name of Shaykh Jamâl ad-Dîn was going somewhere. He unwittingly entered the hunting grounds. His hands were tied and he was brought before the prince. The prince got angry with him and said: "Even a dog is better than an Iranian." Shaykh Jamâl ad-Dîn said: "You are correct. Had Allâh ﷻ not showered us with the bounty and honour of the true religion, a dog would definitely be better than us." The prince asked: "What is this true religion you are talking about?" The Shaykh began explaining the tenets of Islam with such emotion and such religious fervour that the heart of the prince which had

[1] This name was probably changed to Tughluq later on. Fîroz Tughluq, one of the rulers of Delhi, was of Turkish origin and was from the Tughluq family.

been as hard as rock had now melted like wax. The Shaykh exposed such a terrifying picture of unbelief, that the prince was left trembling. The prince said to him: "When you hear that I have been crowned, you should certainly come and meet me."[1]

The words of the Shaykh emanated from his heart. Therefore, whether they appealed to the logic of the prince or not, they certainly had an effect on his heart. These were words that were from Allâh ﷻ. The reason for my saying this is that when inviting towards Islam, as long as a heart which is internally illuminated and which is in pain [longing for people to come towards Allâh ﷻ] is not found and as long as the word is not emanating from the depths of the heart, it cannot have an impact whereby it could cause a revolution in a person's life.

After this incident, the Shaykh continued waiting to receive the information that Qaliq Taymûr has been crowned so that he could go to him and remind him of this incident. However, this was not in his destiny. When he was in the throes of death, he summoned his son, Shaykh Rashîd ad-Dîn, and said to him: "Listen, O my son! This wonderful opportunity was not in my destiny. However, it is probably in your destiny. When you hear that Qaliq Taymûr has been crowned and that he has become the king, you must meet him and inform him of this incident."

When Shaykh Rashîd ad-Dîn heard that Qaliq Taymûr has been crowned, he went to the royal palace. However, who would permit him to enter? When no one could understand what he wanted, he went to a nearby tree, laid down his prayer mat (*muṣallâ*) and began offering ṣalâh. Whenever the time of ṣalâh

[1] Refer to *Da'wat-e-Islam*, translated by Dr. Shaykh 'Inâyatullâh, chapter 8, pp. 235-236.

would come, he would give the *adhân* and offer his ṣalâh. At times apart from *fajr*, the *adhân* is generally not heard [because of the noise and worldly engagements]. One morning, when it was the time of *fajr* and everything was calm and tranquil, the sound of the *adhân* reached the palace. The king asked: "What is this? What is this touching cry? What is this soothing cry?" The people replied: "O king! Rest in peace. There is a man who seems to be absorbed in meditation. He stands up, sits down and utters these words [of the *adhân*]." The king ordered that the man be brought before him. When he was brought, the king asked: "Who are you? And what is this call that you are making?" The Shaykh replied: "Do you remember, once you went hunting and you met an Iranian person by the name of Shaykh Jamâl ad-Dîn? You had spoken certain things to him." The king replied: "Yes, I remember." The Shaykh said: "I have come to give you this testimony that he passed away with îmân." The king immediately embraced Islam.

The historian, Arnold, has also related this incident. It is also recorded in Turkish and Persian literature. The king embraced Islam, called one of his confidants and senior ministers and spoke to him in privacy. The king said to him: "Look, I have thought over the matter and I have now become a Muslim. You can decide about yourself." The confidant replied: "I embraced Islam a long time ago. However, I concealed this out of fear for you." In this way, the entire tribe embraced Islam.[1]

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[1] For further details concerning the Tartars, their savagery and then their acceptance of Islam, refer to the book *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, vol. 1, by the author [Shaykh Abul Ḥasan 'Alî al-Ḥasanî an-Nadwî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*].

No word in the Qur'ân is coincidental

I was saying this, that the words "a good tree" are not coincidental. There is no word in the Qur'ân that is coincidental. So the first condition is that it be a good tree. You cannot merely plant a banyan tree, a margosa tree or plant thorns and then expect to get pretty flowers and good fruit. The tree has to be a good tree. Thereafter, the attribute that Allâh ﷻ has given to the tree is exactly the attribute of His religion, i.e. "whose root is firmly established and whose branches are in the sky." Now study the history of Islam: it commenced totally downcast, devoid of all means and resources, totally weak. But then, how far and wide its branches spread into the world!

"It produces its fruit in every season by the order of its Sustainer." This too is the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân. This tree will produce fruit in every season by the order of Allâh ﷻ. So this is not just a شجرة طيّبة – a good tree, rather, it is a شـــجرة طيّـــبة خالدة – a good, eternal tree. It is not subservient to the changes of time. There are many trees that complete their life span and come to an end. They are destroyed by animals. Sometimes, the person who planted the tree himself chops it down later on. Allâh ﷻ tells us that with regard to place, this tree is such that it grows from the depths of the earth and reaches for the sky. This is its extent with regard to place. As for its extent with regard to time, "It produces its fruit in every season by the order of its Sustainer."

The good tree that was planted by the final Messenger ﷺ

Today you can see the realization of this verse with your own eyes. The good tree that was planted by the final Messenger ﷺ and whose root was firmly embedded in the ground – where was it? It was in the Arabian peninsula. This land was the most backward land in every aspect – politically, intellectually and economically. It was cut-off from the entire world. But to

where did its branches go!? They went to the skies. Look at how many kingdoms and sultanates came into existence through its propagation and conquests. Look at how many intellectual centres and universities came into existence. How many centres of guidance and instruction were established. How many researchers and thinkers were born. How many literati were born. How much of literature was prepared. Even if you were to try and encompass all this for just one language, it would be difficult to do so. The good word which the Messenger ﷺ uttered in the Arabian peninsula has spread to the entire world and it is giving its fruit. Just like the good tree, the good word is bearing its fruit.

Bear in mind four essential components

One is to have knowledge and cognition (*ma'rifah*). The other is the power of speech. The third is sincerity and the fourth is compassion. In other words, it should pain your own heart. Whatever emanates, should emanate from the heart and not merely from the pen. Only then will it have an impact. If we bear in mind these four components, then our spoken and written efforts in inviting towards the true religion will certainly have an impact on the countries of the west, in these changing times and among the different peoples speaking different languages. And Allâh ﷻ will shower us with the best results.

There is a very good glad tiding and a good omen in this verse when Allâh ﷻ says: "It produces its fruit in every season by the order of its Sustainer." If not, a person would have said: "The time has passed. This is now the 20th century. The world has progressed tremendously. Look at the progress that has been made by science, politics and technology. The criteria for the intellect and thinking have changed. That time [of the past] is no longer here. Islam can no longer have that impact today." By saying: "It produces its fruit in every season by the order of

its Sustainer",the Qur'ân consoles us and gives us strength so that no people –irrespective of where they may be and when it may be – could think: "Of what benefit would our inviting towards Islam be?" By using the words كُلَّ حِينٍ - " in every season", the Qur'ân has put an end to all limitations of time.

However, all this will only occur by the will and power of allah ﷻ. By using the words بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا - "by the order of its Sustainer", we are taught that we should not rely on our intelligence or on the power of our speech. Rather, we should also realize that this will only have an effect if Allâh ﷻwills it so. This encompasses the entire picture of inviting towards Allâh ﷻ.

Da'wah and using wisdom in *da'wah*

أُدْعُ إِلى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ. إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ.

"Invite to the way of your Sustainer with wisdom and with kind admonition. And argue with them in a way that is best. Your Sustainer alone knows best he who strayed from His path, and He alone knows best those who are on the path." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 125)

This is an address of Allâh ﷻ directed to His final Messenger ﷺ for the final *ummah*. This is because there is no *ummah* after this. The above verse is from the last section of Sûrah an-Nahl. It explains the manner of inviting [towards Allâh ﷻ] and teaching [people]. Allâh ﷻ says:

أُدْعُ إِلى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

"Invite to the way of your Sustainer with wisdom and with kind admonition."

The comprehensive and miraculous nature of this verse and its extent and depth

It is the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân that it did not lay down the limits for the method of *da'wah*. Rather, it has left this task to the discretion and sound intellect of the person making *da'wah*. The ability to decide when, at what time and in which way the *da'wah* should be made will all be governed by the very temperament and beliefs of the person. His religious way of thinking which governs his emotions and nerves will itself choose a way for him. The Qur'ân merely gives a broad outline in which the full spirit of inviting towards Allâh ﷻ is encompassed.

In the light of the above verse, two factors are absolutely clear: how much of freedom the *dâ'î* has and how much of limitations there are. How far can he go, and to what extent is it prohibited for him to go beyond the limit. As for the extent of the *da'wah*

and the freedom that the *dâ'î* has, these are clear from the words:

أُدْعُ إِلى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ

"Invite to the way of your Sustainer"

This verse does not ask you to invite towards îmân, to invite towards true and authentic beliefs, to invite towards the establishment of salâh, to urge people to adopt noble character or to teach them to honour and respect human life. All these things have not been said. However, all these aspects are included in the words "the way of your Sustainer". These words have opened the horizons of thinking and practising. These horizons too are not limited. They include other divinely revealed religions, human necessities and the different needs that would present themselves in human life.

Even the word أدع – "invite" has a very broad meaning. It does not have the restriction that you should invite by means of lectures, by means of writing, nor by restricting yourself to mere admonition and instruction. This word, أدع encompasses all these meanings and, according to the situation, the *dâ'î* can fulfil the responsibility of *da'wah* by way of advising and admonishing, lectures, writing and other media. He can choose every means that is permitted in the Sharî'ah, which is effective and which would be of benefit. After the word أدع, Allâh ﷻ says: سبيل ربك – "to the way of your Sustainer". Apart from this expression, there can be no other expression which entails such comprehensiveness, such expansiveness, such depth and such a firm hold all at the same time.

The meaning of "wisdom" and "kind admonition"

The word حكمة – "wisdom" is an extremely eloquent and expansive word. It is not easy to translate this word in any other

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"Invite to the way of your Sustainer"

This verse does not ask you to invite towards îmân, to invite towards true and authentic beliefs, to invite towards the establishment of salâh, to urge people to adopt noble character or to teach them to honour and respect human life. All these things have not been said. However, all these aspects are included in the words "the way of your Sustainer". These words have opened the horizons of thinking and practising. These horizons too are not limited. They include other divinely revealed religions, human necessities and the different needs that would present themselves in human life.

Even the word ادع – "invite" has a very broad meaning. It does not have the restriction that you should invite by means of lectures, by means of writing, nor by restricting yourself to mere admonition and instruction. This word, ادع encompasses all these meanings and, according to the situation, the *dâ'î* can fulfil the responsibility of *da'wah* by way of advising and admonishing, lectures, writing and other media. He can choose every means that is permitted in the Sharî'ah, which is effective and which would be of benefit. After the word ادع, Allâh ﷻ says: سبيل ربك – "to the way of your Sustainer". Apart from this expression, there can be no other expression which entails such comprehensiveness, such expansiveness, such depth and such a firm hold all at the same time.

The meaning of "wisdom" and "kind admonition"

The word حكمة – "wisdom" is an extremely eloquent and expansive word. It is not easy to translate this word in any other

language. In like manner, the word موعظة – "admonition" has a very broad meaning. The word حسنة – "kind" also has limitless meanings. In this verse, the Qur'ân has given us freedom and at the same time set certain limitations. It is concise and brief, and at the same time it is lengthy and detailed.

اُدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

"Invite to the way of your Sustainer with wisdom and with kind admonition."

The word حكمة means intellect, intelligence, good disposition, good planning, the ability to clearly expound the truth and settle it in the hearts, it should not have any hint of flattery or opportunity-seizing, and it should not have any political influence. Politics is a separate entity and حكمة and موعظة are separate entities.

Mûsâ ﷺ, the most beloved servant of Allâh ﷻ of his time, receives the order to go and invite Pharaoh, the most abhorred, the most oppressive and the most tyrannical person of his time. However, Mûsâ ﷺ is ordered to speak to him in a well-mannered and soft tone. Allâh ﷻ says:

اِذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى

"Go to Pharaoh for he has become extremely arrogant." (Sûrah Tâ Hâ, verse 43)

However, what manner of *da'wah* should you adopt with such a rebellious and arrogant person?

فَقُوْلَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا

"But speak to him in a mild manner." (Sûrah Tâ Hâ, verse 44)

Your words should be firm and true, but you should speak in a well-mannered, soft and pleasing way.

لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

"perhaps he will accept the admonition or he might fear [the punishment of Allâh]" (Sûrah Tâ Hâ, verse 44)

So that he may take admonition, or, after hearing such well-mannered speech, humility and fear would come into his heart and he would abstain from his unbelief, transgression, evil and oppression. When good words are spoken in a bad manner, they are not beneficial. A poet rightly said:

"He speaks good, but in a bad manner."

To say good words in a good manner entails good etiquette and wisdom. Even if you have to engage in questions and answers with your addressee, you must do so in a good manner. We have been instructed to adopt this good manner even when debating and arguing:

وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

"And argue with them in a way that is best."

This is so that the listeners and the onlookers may be impressed by the method of providing evidence of the *dâ'î*. If the method of discussion and debating is done in the best way, the addressee will by himself be impressed on the basis of his sound intellect and noble disposition. If he is not impressed, the good manner of debating would certainly make an impression on those who are present. This fact is also made clear from the following verse:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيْمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلّٰهِ حَنِيْفًا، وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ

"Ibrâhîm was a model [of piety], devoted to Allâh, turning away from all [but Allâh]. And he was not of the polytheists." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 120)

Despite this manner of reasoning, good conduct, wisdom, admonition and arguing in a way that is best, Ibrâhîm ﷺ is referred to as:

حَنِيْفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَّمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ

"he was a Hanif [averse to all false creeds] and obedient. He was not of the polytheists." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 67)

This was because there was wisdom in his *da'wah*. There was no flattery in it. There was leniency in it. There was no politics. It is therefore necessary for a Muslim to adopt this style of conveying the message of Allâh ﷻ. Even for the rectification of beliefs, the method of inviting "to the way of your Sustainer with wisdom", is the most beneficial method. Irrespective of how essential and crucial the matter may be, the *dâ'î* has to have this purpose in his mind that he has to treat the sick person. That he has to have love, leniency and affection. A sick person is scared to even go near an experienced and popular doctor when the latter has the qualities of harshness, severity, anger and fierceness in him let alone going to him for treatment. The Muslims are addressed thus:

لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

"There has come to you a Messenger from amongst you: it weighs heavily upon him that which harasses you. [He is] anxious over your well-being. [He is] extremely compassionate and merciful to the believers." (Sûrah at-Taubah, verse 128)

It is also incumbent on the follower of Muhammad ﷺ to practise on this verse. He has to invite with wisdom, love and affection. He has to instruct and guide in a noble manner and thereby incline and urge his addressees for the reformation of their beliefs.

The status of the Muslim *ummah* and its call

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللهِ

"You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world - you enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and you believe in Allâh." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 110)

The Muslim *ummah* is the bearer of the final religious message. This message encompasses all its actions, deeds and movements. Its status is one of leadership, guidance, supervision and accounting of the world. The Qur'ân announces with much force and explicitness:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

"You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world"

The words "which has been sent into the world" show that this *ummah* is not some greenery that just grows on its own accord – like the grass of a forest or some wild tree. Rather, the words "which has been sent into the world" have been used in the passive voice which is attributed to Allâh ﷻ. There is a difference between خروج and إخراج. The word خروج shows a personal and individual act [done by the person himself]. On the other hand, the word إخراج shows the act done by some other higher force. In other words, this *ummah* has been created for some special purpose. It has been brought into existence for the protection of humanity and to execute the goals of the creator of the universe [Allâh ﷻ] by being made the vicegerent of Allâh ﷻ.

Since Allâh ﷻ had decided to seal prophet-hood and messenger-ship with Muhammad ﷺ and wanted his religion to remain till the resurrection, so in order to ensure the continuation of humanity, Allâh ﷻ made it such that He sent forth an entire *ummah* with the Messenger ﷺ. The Sahâbah ﷺ

knew this fact and would therefore use similar words themselves. When Rustam, the Persian ruler, asked Rib'î ‘Âmir ﷺ:

ما الذي جاء بكم؟

"What has brought you here?"

Why have you left your desert and come here? What propel you to come here? Rib'î ﷺ replied:

إنما لنخرج من شاء من عبادة العباد إلى عبادة الله، ومن ضيق الدنيا إلى سعتها، ومن جور الأديان إلى عدل الإسلام

"Allâh ﷻ has sent us in order to remove whoever wills from the servitude of creatures to the servitude of Allâh ﷻ, from the constriction of this world to its wide expanses, from the injustice of religions to the justice of Islam."

On this occasion, Rib'î ﷺ used the word ابتعثنا.

تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

"you enjoin the good and forbid the evil"

This is the purpose behind sending the *ummah* of Muhammad ﷺ - that they enjoin the good and forbid the evil. The "enjoining of good and forbidding of evil" is a powerful pillar and universal department of Islam. All the things of this world are connected to this. It is for this reason that this department has been specifically allotted to this *ummah*. If we were to search for the reason for the superiority and greatness of this *ummah*, we will conclude that a very high and lofty task has been taken from this *ummah* on account of which it has been conferred with the very honourable title of خير الأمم – the best of all nations.

This is a distinction of the commissioning of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that while the commission of other Prophets was individual and confined to themselves, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

was commissioned together with his *ummah*. Now this *ummah* has to fulfil that responsibility which the Prophets and Messengers of the past used to fulfil. This despite the fact that this *ummah* is not a Prophet.

You can understand this in this way that the commission of Rasûlullâh ﷺ has a special distinction in comparison to the other Prophets. This distinction is that together with the commission of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the *ummah* has also been commissioned with the task of continuing and expanding on the responsibility of *da'wah*. However, this commission is not like that of a Prophet. Prophet-hood and being commissioned (بعثة) are two separate words. Prophet-hood can only be applied to that chosen person who has been chosen by Allâh ﷻ for the position of prophet-hood. On the other hand, the word بعثة can be applied to the nation as well. Rasûlullâh ﷺ has used this word for his *ummah*. He said:

إنما بعثتم ميسرين و لم تبعثوا معسرين

"You have been sent in order to simplify matters. You have not been sent to complicate matters."

The word بعثة is used in this Hadîth. In other words, you have been sent, you have been appointed, you have been named, your position has been specified and your duty has been laid down. You have been appointed as ميسرين – those who simplify matters. You have not been appointed as معسرين – those who complicate matters.

From this we learn that this *ummah* holds a special and specific purpose in life. It has a perfect call for the world. Its education and culturing, its efforts and endeavours, its actions, all its activities, its beliefs – are all subservient to its goals and its message. Commanding the good and prohibiting the evil is a special responsibility of this *ummah* and the purpose of its creation.

Only enjoining the good and forbidding the evil can s humanity from destruction

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللهِ

"You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world - you enjoin the good a forbid the evil, and you believe in Allâh." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 110)

A universal department and the ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ

Enjoining the good is a universal department. It has there been specifically allotted to the *ummah* of Muḥammad ﷺ. If were to search for the reason for the superiority of this *umm* we will conclude that a high and lofty task has been placed it, on account of which it has been conferred with honourable title of "the best of all nations". This task conveying this religion of Islam is a department which Allâh shouldered to this *ummah*. The fervour and zeal to se humanity is another name of saving this *ummah* from the fire hell. Its mission is on the branch of its *da'wah*. In reality, original purpose for the creation of this world is the recogniti of the essence and the attributes of Allâh ﷻ. This is n possible until humanity is cleansed from the filth of evil a embellished with good and virtue. It is therefore said th success and triumph are only for those who are fulfilling th task.

The purpose behind commissioning Muḥammad ﷺ

The commissioning of this *ummah* is an extension of t commissioning of Muḥammad ﷺ. It is for this reason that t responsibility and the reins of spreading this religion have be given into the hands of this *ummah*. If this *ummah* fulfils th responsibility, it will be successful. If it does not, it will suff two harms:

(1) They will be admitting that they are not qualified. Or, in other words, they will be placing a very big accusation on their heads. Allâh ﷻ has created man for a particular task. If he does not fulfil that task but does a thousand others tasks, they will be considered to be worthless. The nightingale has a melodious and heart capturing voice. But if it does not sing, a crow will be better than it. If a peacock does not dance, a duck will be better than it. If salt does not have the quality of saltiness in it, and instead, rubies and gemstones are in its place, they will be useless. If a thing is created for a particular purpose and does not fulfil that purpose, then of what use is it?

A world that is on the brink of death and a life-giving message

Who is going to save this wandering and stumbling humanity which is on the verge of falling into a deep pit? It is not one humanity which is sick; everything is sick – the morals are sick, the society is sick, the soul is sick, the beliefs are sick, the îmân is sick – the entire humanity is sick. Who is going to treat all this? The fact of the matter is that the system of having a strong bond with Allâh ﷻ (الـتعلق مع الله) and inviting towards Allâh ﷻ (الدعوة إلى الله) has been cut off.

If this *ummah* of Muḥammad ﷺ abandons this responsibility, it will be put through severe calamities, pains and humiliation. It will be deprived of all divine help and assistance. All this will happen because it has not recognized its responsible position and it has not valued it. It has remained heedless to the task to which it was made responsible. By remaining heedless to this task, laziness and lethargy will become rife. The pathways of deviation will open up. Mutual differences will break out. Inhabited places will become deserted. The creation will be destroyed and annihilated. All this is happening but the realisation of this destruction and annihilation will only come

when we will be summoned before Allâh ﷻ on the field o resurrection.

The doctor is himself sick

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is a powerful pill of Islam with which all other aspects of Islam are connected. This fact is clear before us that our actual sickness is ou disconnection with the Islamic spirit which is actually becaus of the weakness of our îmân. Our Islamic sentiments have bee destroyed. The strength of our îmân is gone. The reason for ou sickness is our abandonment of the essential factor upon whic the existence of our entire religion is based and around which revolves. That essential factor is enjoining the good an forbidding the evil.

(2) The second harm of abandoning this responsibility is th humanity is crying out – everything is being done but the wor of *da'wah* is not being done. This is because the soldiers wh were allotted to a particular war front have moved away fro their designated area. They have therefore been deprived o their position and also the things that they would have receive had they remained in their position.

The responsibility of da'wah and reformation

The Islamic Sharî'ah considers collective life, collectiv reformation and collective progress to be the basis. The Muslim *ummah* is considered to be a body. If one part experiences pain the entire body experiences discomfort. It is for this reason tha enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is considered to be the natural disposition and essential component of îmân. This i so that in order to fulfil this responsibility, a person ma acquire excellence and perfection within himself. It is obvious that a nation can never progress unless its individuals embellish themselves with excellent and perfect qualities. It now become our responsibility to stand up to fulfil this responsibility o

da'wah in such a way that our strength increases and Islamic conquests take place. That we recognize Allâh ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ and submit ourselves before the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ. This is because this task is an important act of worship of Allâh ﷻ and the greatest of fortunes. Moreover, it is a trust that was given to the Prophets. The purpose of this task is not the guidance of others. Rather, it aims to reform one's own self and display one's own servitude [to Allâh ﷻ]. If we fulfil this task in the correct manner, we will enjoy a life of honour, respect, peace and tranquillity.

CHAPTER THREE

ÎMÂN AND STEADFASTNESS

- When conditions are to your advantage and the winds are favourable…
- When you receive a prize for remaining steadfast on a particular standpoint and you are showered with flowers…
- When the star of acceptance of any nation or group is lofty and its good fortune is aiding it…
- When joining a particular group is a source of honour and a mark of distinction…

…then remaining steadfast on that standpoint and displaying that creed at such a time is not an act of courage and bravery.

However,

- When the conditions are not advantageous and the winds are blowing fiercely against you…
- When the feet of many great young men are slipping...
- When adopting any principles or beliefs is synonymous to inviting disgrace and humiliation…
- When it is the time of a nation's downfall, when prosperity has turned its face away from it, and when the eyes of time are turned away from it…

…then remaining steadfast and firm on that religion and attributing yourself to that group is the feat of very courageous men, an act of great loyalty and sincerity.

However, remaining steadfast on Islam, attributing yourself to it, and displaying its salient features is something to be proud of and something enjoyable even at a time when conditions are to your advantage and also at a time when the Muslims are

successful, when Islam is reigning supreme in the world and when it does not have to see failure in any matter. However, the enjoyment that is experienced when remaining loyal and devoted at the time of trials and tribulations cannot be experienced in anything else.

This is the time when those who remain steadfast on the truth, those who propagate the truth and truthfulness, those who sacrifice their own benefits and honour for the sake of their belief and their conscience begin tasting the wonderful taste of paradise in this very world and the hymns of Allâh's praise and gratitude cry out from every single part of their body.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

The story of seven young men

إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى. وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا.

"They were young men who firmly believed in their Sustainer and We increased them in guidance. We strengthened their hearts when they stood up and said: "Our Sustainer is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. We will never invoke anyone as a deity apart from Him. (Or else) we would have said something that exceeds the bounds of reason." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 13-14)

I have recited these verses of Sûrah al-Kahf before you. If I were to give a title to this in accordance with the expression and style of today, I would say it is "the story of seven young men".

A special message for our youth

This story contains a special message for the youth among humanity and it is a lofty example which can be of use in every era. It can act as a whip not only for the heart and mind, but for man's capabilities, his courage and his resolutions. Sometimes it causes dew to drip and sometimes it causes flowers to fall continuously. I too would like to relate the story of youth to the youth. It is not I who is relating it, it is the Qur'ân that is relating this story. It is the story of those youth whom the Qur'ân has immortalised by relating their story in the Qur'ân. It is an example and an ideal that is worthy of emulation by the youth of every time and era. The story is very brief and very simple. However, it is very deep and very admonitory.

The story is that there was a call and a message in a section of the Roman Empire known as Syria and Palestine. This message was brought by 'Îsâ ﷺ [Jesus]. According to us Muslims, he is also a true Messenger of Allâh ﷻ. He called the people towards *tauḥîd*. At that time, polytheism had spread throughout the world. A pitch black darkness had covered everything. A light

shone in the midst of this darkness. 'Îsâ ﷺ raised a call against polytheism, worship of lineage, worship of rituals, worship of superstitions, worship of the outward, and the extortion of humanity. The basis of this call was *tauḥîd* and the true worship of Allâh ﷻ. Some people accepted this call and they defended it and invited towards it. They stepped out of this province of theirs, went close to the capital of the Roman Empire and presented their message.

It has been noticed in most instances that in comparison to mature and experienced people [on whose legs are heavy shackles of experience, benefits, rites and rituals, fear and hope, and which keep them back from any new experience and any revolutionary step], the young and youthful people [on whose legs these heavy shackles are not fastened] and whose relations and attachment is not with those things which the elderly generally have an attachment to, accept a new and virtuous call more quickly.

The Qur'ân does not specify the age of these youths. This is the norm of the Qur'ân – had the Qur'ân stated that they were 18 or 20 years old, those who are elder or younger than them would have an excuse of saying that this story does not concern them. The Qur'ân merely says: إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ – they were youths. Those who have a taste of Arabic know fully well that while the word فَتَى refers to young age, it also refers to a youthful heart and mind, youthful determinations, youthful resolutions and youthful intentions. I have therefore chosen to translate this word as "young men". The word فِتْيَة is the plural of فَتَى. Another plural of the word فَتَى is فِتْيَان. However, the word فِتْيَة is used for جمع قلة – a plural indicating a lesser number. By using this plural, the Qur'ân makes reference to the fact that these youth were few in number. This has always been the case – when the true call of worshipping Allâh ﷻ and reforming society comes, then those

who believe in it are initially few in number. It is these few whom Allâh ﷻ inspired and gave them this courage.

It was a matter of sustaining and nourishing

In this instance, Allâh ﷻ chose the word رب from among all His beautiful names and attributes. He says:

إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ

"They were young men who firmly believed in their Sustainer"

This word – رب – is very meaningful. Sometimes even some governments make the claim of being sustainers to their inhabitants (they make this claim either verbally or by their actions). Together with this, such ideas and beliefs become connected that if you have to make arrangements for your upbringing, and if you have to live a life of honour and comfort, then you will have to attach yourself to such governments, you will have to bear with them, you will have to join them, you will have to agree to whatever they say. Without this, the doors of sustenance, a comfortable and tranquil life are shut at once. When the Qur'ân uses a particular word, it is like a gemstone in a ring. The theme of entire books is expressed by a single word.

These young men stood up in that jungle of humanity wherein the flag of the Roman Empire was fluttering. It was an empire which was the most organized of the time, the most progressive, with the most advanced law, and which governed the largest piece of land of that time. These youths stand up right under the nose of the government and right before its eyes. They accept this call [to *tauḥîd*] and then announce it. It was the correct religion of the time and the Islam of that era. Till then there had been no alterations in Christianity. These standard bearers of the authentic religion of 'Îsâ ﷺ reached that place [where these youths lived]. They said: "The

government is not responsible for our sustenance and our nurturing. Our Sustainer and nourisher is Allâh. He alone is responsible for our sustenance." They said:

رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"Our Sustainer is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth."

This statement was made in that systemized empire which had taken control of the means of livelihood. It was as though it had become the master of its inhabitants' fortune and sustenance. It seemed as if all the powers of profit and loss were in its hands. At that time, there was only one proof of intelligence and being realistic – that is, to connect yourself with the government and to accept its beliefs or to at least remain silent over its beliefs and thereby live a good life in that province.

These youths rejected the entire Greek mythology and Roman mythology – both of which had fully pervaded Roman civilization, culture, society, beliefs and actions. The entire society had become polytheistic and superstitious. The attributes of Allâh ﷻ were portrayed in the form of idols in Greece, Rome (and ancient India as well). Massive places of worship and temples were built in their names. One was an idol of love, one of kindness, one who provided sustenance, one for wars, one that showed its awe and might, one that brought rain, and so on. These youths rejected all these with a single voice and said:

رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَاْ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ إِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ إِذًا شَطَطًا. هٰؤُلَآءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ اٰلِهَةً ط لَوْ لَا يَأْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ بَيِّنٍ ط فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا.

"Our Sustainer is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. We will never invoke anyone as a deity apart from Him. [Or else] we would have said something that exceeds the bounds of reason. These people of ours have assigned gods other than Allâh. Why do they not bring any clear evidence in their support? Who could be more sinful than he who fabricates a lie against Allâh?" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 14-15)

Your Sustainer is addressing you

The Qur'ân explains one additional fact over here: the first step is taken by man, he has to show his courage first and then help comes from Allâh ﷻ. When these youths passed this stage, "We increased them in guidance." From this we learn that Allâh ﷻ is the source of guidance and it is His recognition. Guidance is obtained from Him. It is not obtained by your intellectual capability, your intelligence, your lectures, mere studying and mere treasures of books. Allâh ﷻ has attributed guidance to Himself. And like the speech of the royalty, He has used the plural: زدناهم هدى – "We increased them in guidance". In other words, since it is We who increased them in guidance they reached such a high rank. They humbled themselves before Allâh ﷻ, they beseeched Him, they endeavoured in acquiring His recognition, they pondered and reflected in order to acquire a recognition and understanding of His lofty attributes and beautiful names. When they did all this, We increased their guidance to very high levels.

If a person waits for something to permeate his heart on its own or to be placed around his neck on its own, then this is not correct. He will first of all have to make a decision himself and then show some courage. Allâh's ﷻ help will come after that. Allâh ﷻ says: وربطنا على قلوبهم – "We strengthened their hearts" because they were going against the greatest and most powerful empire of that time. They were leaving the official religion and adopting a new religion.

The practical zeal of the youths

This is the story of the companions of the cave. During my journey to east Jordan in 1973, I had the opportunity of seeing this cave. The Jordanian director of ancient places, Wafâ ad-Dujânî, took me to visit this place. He established through

proofs that this was the very place where the companions of the cave had been.[1]

History shows us that this story was being composed as poetry for centuries. It has thus become a portion of the literature of that place. I have written in great detail in this regard in my book, *Faith versus Materialism*, in the light of comparative studies. We also learn from history that these youths were mostly the children of those who were in the king's palace. In other words, they were dependent on the empire. Someone's father, someone's uncle, and someone's elder brother was in some high position in the Roman Empire at that time. This entire matter was therefore more complicated and more intricate. It was not just a few unknown and rebellious youth who stood up against the government, who raised the voice of rebellion, who said that they do not accept the official religion and that they have adopted a new religion. Rather, these youths were those with whom their families and their entire families prosperity and honour were connected. Because of this courage of theirs, their parents, the seniors and responsible members of their families were all placed in a difficult position. They could have been directly questioned as to why they did not stop their children and dear ones from such a rebellious resolution. On the other hand, it was also a great test for these responsible members of their families. They were responsible for these youths. They had much hope in them. They must have seen a bright future for them.

This psychological condition which is experienced by the seniors and responsible members of a family on seeing such courage of their youngsters has been described in a very

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[1] Refer to his book, *Iktishâf al-Kahf wa Ashâb al-Kahf*. In my book, *Ma'rakah Îmân wa Mâddîyyat*, I had identified that cave according to my studies and research of that time. I then changed my opinion.

eloquent manner in another place in the Qur'ân. When Sâlih ﷺ presented the call of *tauhîd* and the true religion to the Thamûd people, the senior members of the tribe said in a very hearty rendering tone to him: "O Sâlih! We had many hopes and expectations in you for the future. We thought that you would follow this line which your people are following, that you would develop some excellent qualities and thereby illuminate the name of your family and be a source of honour and pride for your people."

قَالُوْا يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْنَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَا

"They said: 'O Sâlih! We had lots of hope in you before this.'" (Sûrah Hûd, verse 62)

You have now poured water over our hopes. You have come with this new religion and thereby turned the entire nation against you.

The word مرجو is quite close to the English word "promising". This word is applied to a bright young student or a youngster whose future seems to be bright.

These youths were very few in number. Based on certain calculations and analogical reasoning, they did not number more than seven. However, the fact of the matter is that the future of several hundred people was connected to them. An entire family and the entire tribe was connected to each one of them. All of these were put into danger by their courage. They were all viewed with suspicion. These youths were the focal points of the hopes of so many families. The progress and prosperity of many homes were connected to them. People think very little in this direction. Many people think that it was a matter which concerned just seven or eight youngsters. If they were apprehended, well and good. If they were killed, well and good. If they were deprived of the comforts of life, then it is just seven who have been deprived. It does not cross the mind of people that such a matter is never confined to just one

person. It is difficult to confine something to an individual in a progressive society. Poets may imagine this, but in this real life, there is no individual who is alone. He has connections and relations with so many other people. Therefore, there is no one single person. If these seven youths rebel against the government, you can conclude that 70 families become involved. The matter was therefore very important and it is for this reason that the Qur'ân relates this incident as an example.

At present, the books of history do not have details as to how these youths were threatened and terrorized, as to how they were cajoled and enticed. In order to put an end to such rebellion (especially when it is from youngsters and youths), many terrorizing things are said and shown to them and at the same time many enticing things are offered to them. In most cases, the enticing things prove to be more effective and more successful than the terrorizing things.

An elder who had to endure both these things had once said that monetary offerings are more subtle than the whip. The governments and other powers bring the whip sometimes, and sometimes they make monetary offerings. So the whip and money, both, must have been brought before these youths. But they bore both these things. This they did because Allâh ﷻ conferred their hearts with the wealth of strength, tranquillity, patience, forbearance, sacrifice and selflessness. Allâh ﷻ says: وربطنا على قلوبهم – "We strengthened their hearts".

We strengthened their hearts

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ

We strengthened their hearts. We restrained their hearts. We tied their hearts. This is because when something is left open, it flies away by the mere blowing of the wind. When something is

tied, it remains bound. We therefore tied their hearts so that they do not wander this way and that way.

إِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"when they stood up and said: 'Our Sustainer is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth."

By standing up, it does not mean that they had been sitting and then stood up. Rather, it means that a firm determination developed within themselves and they announced: "Our Sustainer is He who is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth."

لَنْ نَّدْعُوَاْ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ إِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ إِذًا شَطَطًا

"We will never invoke anyone as a deity apart from Him. [Or else] we would have said something that exceeds the bounds of reason. We would have said something that would be contrary to the facts."

هٰؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ آلِهَةً

These people of ours appear to be very considerate people. They are very composed people. They are very experienced people. Despite all this, they have left Allâh ﷻ and adopted other gods.

لَوْ لَا يَأْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ

"Why do they not bring any proof for this?"

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللهِ كَذِبًا

"Who can be more unjust that he who fabricates a lie against Allâh?"

Three matters

These are the verses of Sûrah al-Kahf which I recited before you and explained to you. The lesson that we learn from this is that first of all, îmân has to be firmly embedded. With much insight and strength, our îmân in Allâh ﷻ and in His attributes

has to be firmly embedded. If we are students, then this îmân has to be firmly embedded in an academic way. If we are from the general masses, then too, our îmân has to remain steadfast in Allâh ﷻ with complete honesty.

The second matter is that from the words زدنـاهم هـدى – "We increased them in guidance" – we learn that we have to connect ourselves with that fountain of guidance from where it is flowing, viz. by studying the Qur'ân and Sunnah. We have to acquire strength from the perfect example of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and the lives of the Sahâbah ﷺ and the *mujâhidîn* of Islam. This is similar to a battery being charged. When its cells are finished, they are replaced. We move around in this material world. We also study from such teachers who themselves do not have full conviction in Islamic and unseen facts and realities. Our era is filled with such things that at every step we will find and encounter things that would cause us to become neglectful of Allâh ﷻ. Everything is causing us to forget ourselves and to forget Allâh ﷻ: look at the television, listen to the radio, read the newspapers [they are all causing us to forget and become neglectful]. So much so, that even literature (*adab*) which is supposed to be pure, innocent and impartial, is no longer impartial. Rather, it has become the agent of immorality. At present, our literature has become a very cheap agent and go-between for the forces of falsehood, for sinning, for vain desires and for immoral character. All these things that have surrounded us from all sides like a sea and we have been cast into the sea. Our conditions and our system of education has cast us into this sea. Yet we say: "O my son! Beware, do not let your garments get wet." If we want to save our garments, it is necessary for us to ponder and reflect over the words "We increased them in guidance." It is necessary that we light the lamp of îmân. That we create heat and love within ourselves. Without these things, we cannot combat these desires. We cannot combat these things merely by the system of the

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jamâ'ah and by the rule of morals. I am telling you
experience that time has proven to be so tyrannical a
demands are so imposing that if we do not have the stren
îmân to combat it and if we do not have that model bef
which is found in the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, we will not be
to combat time.

The initial stage of *da'wah* towards îmân

وَاذْكُرُوْٓا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ أَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَاٰوٰكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ.

"Remember the time when you were few and subdued in the land, fearing that people will snatch you away. He then gave you refuge, made you strong with His help and gave you sustenance of good things so that you may be grateful." (Sûrah al-Anfâl, verse 26)

This is a verse of Sûrah al-Anfâl. Allâh ﷻ addresses the Muslims saying: Remember the time when you were few in number. You were insignificant. You could be counted on the fingers. You were considered very weak. You were treated just like any other weak person is treated. Whoever wished, could harm you. Whoever wished, could vex and annoy you. You were considered weak by the entire world. تخافون أن يتخطفكم الناس – all the time you feared someone pouncing upon you suddenly and snatching you away. فاوكم الله – Allâh ﷻ then gave you refuge. وأيدكم بنصره – and He helped you with His special help, He protected you and steered you. ورزقكم من الطيبات – and He bestowed you with great bounties. لعلكم تشكرون – so that you may be grateful.

Ponder over this verse of the Qur'ân and remember the conditions and circumstances that the Muslims were experiencing in Medina in the first century of the *hijrah* – emigration.

Dârul Arqam – the place of refuge of the Muslims

When I recite this verse of the Qur'ân, my mind goes towards *Dârul Arqam* and *Shi'b Abî Tâlib*. What was this *Dârul Arqam*? It was that house wherein the Muslims used to take refuge in order to save themselves from the harms of the

unbelievers, from their hard-heartedness and from th animalistic treatment, and in order to engage in remembrance of Allâh ﷻ and offer salâh with peace a tranquillity. Many distinguished and illustrious Sahâbah went to this house in order to embrace Islam. As far a remember, even 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb ﷺ went there a embraced Islam. This was *Dârul Arqam*, the place of refuge the Muslims.

As for *Shi'b Abî Tâlib*, this was the place where Rasûlullâh and the Sahâbah ﷺ had to go to seek refuge – when all conta with them was severed and they were boycotted. No trad could sell his wares to them and no food could reach the However, there were a few honourable people of Mecca wh used to convey food to them in some way or the other where these Muslims were able to survive. If not, all the means f their death had been arranged by this boycott. Guards we stationed in all directions and they were surrounded in such way that there could be no contact with the outside world. Th was the scene of that time.

The Qur'ân addresses the Muslims (who could not have bee more than a few thousand at that time) and says:

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

"when you were few and subdued in the land"

تَخَافُوْنَ أَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ

"fearing that people will snatch you away"

The Qur'ân uses the word تَخَطُّف over here, which means t pounce upon and snatch away. The situation was such that yo were a fresh and juicy morsel of food. Let alone the mighty powers of the world and the Arabian peninsula, this tribe of th Quraysh would have been sufficient to extinguish this light [o

Islam]. The Qur'ân has expressed this notion of extinguishing a light in the following way:

يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِئُوْا نُوْرَ اللهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ

"They seek to extinguish the light of Allâh with their mouths..." (Sûrah as-Saff, verse 8)

This is not just a literary word. All the words of the Qur'ân are miraculous in nature. A true and accurate picture is painted in this word. The situation was such that the light of the Muslims' lives and the light of Islam could have been extinguished at any time. There was no need for any fan to extinguish its light. This could have been done by the mouth. Allâh ﷻ has used these words two or three places in the Qur'ân. It has portrayed a true and accurate picture of the situation of the Muslims through these words.

Thereafter Allâh ﷻ says:

فَاوٰكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ.

He then gave you refuge. He strengthened you through divine and heavenly assistance. Not only this, He bestowed you with lawful and pure things so that you may be grateful.

The word طيبات is general in nature. From ordinary authority to absolute authority and self-chosen authority, and during the days of authority the honour, respect, independence, promulgation of laws, freedom, self-determination and loftiness which you enjoy are all included in the word طيبات.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ

Perhaps you may be grateful and the desire to show gratitude may be created in you.

As long as this verse is recited – those who are conversant with the pure life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ or who will study the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, those who have studied Islamic history, those

who have studied the history of religions, those who have studied the history of different faiths and revolutions – they will all certainly remember *Dârul Arqam*.

The business of îmân and conviction

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ

"Surely those who believed and emigrated and strove in the cause of Allâh, they are the ones who can hope for the mercy of Allâh." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 218)

A rare pearl does not come into the hand just like that

All knowledge and all studies, all acts of worship and spiritual exercises, and the purpose and sole aim of all reformation and training is recognition [of Allâh ﷻ] and conviction [in Him]. However, this recognition and conviction are not some fallen items that can be found on the road. For us to be engrossed in our occupations and diversions, in our economic pursuits, in fulfilling our desires, and in other preoccupations of this life and yet be expectant of this rare pearl falling into our hand is totally against the self-honour of Allâh ﷻ. The bounty of îmân and the wealth of conviction are not such items that can be placed around the neck of anybody and everybody – whether the person desires it or not, whether he values it or not. The Qur'ân quotes the words of a Prophet:

أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ

"Should we impose the wealth of îmân around your necks even if you dislike it?" (Sûrah Hûd, verse 28)

those with high aspirations and those who are fully aware of the facts have borne numerous hardships for this. They cleansed the seas and only then did the desired pearls come to their hands. Take the example of just one Imâm Ghazzâlî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. That Imâm Ghazzâlî to whom Allâh ﷻ conferred the kingdom of knowledge. That person who was controlling a kingdom while sitting on a straw mat began to perceive that he does not have the conviction that he ought to

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have within himself. He eventually gave up all that honour and status and went away. He said to himself: "As long as that conviction is not developed within me, I will not return." And so, Allâh ﷻ helped and assisted him.

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

Those who ... Allâh ﷻ help... them. Allâh ... d blessed him with that we ... ing. He came back with s... ch recognition [of Allâh ﷻ ... but hundreds of thousand... , that state of îmân is bein...

Allâh ﷻ con... of his true and sincere ques... He conferred him with co... gth to convey this convicti... means for the conviction ...

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When Jibra'îl ﷺ asked Rasûlullâh ﷺ ما الإحسان؟ - what is *ihsân*? He replied: أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه – that you worship Allâh ﷻ in such a

This ayat.
Hadhrat bayaan: 12/10/10
- Every man wants to succeed, But he either will succeed for wordly things, or the true success, he will succeed in ALLAH's commands.
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This strong perception had also caused Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* to become restless and agitated. All the time this thought crossed his mind that I am studying and I am teaching. The words of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ are on my tongue all the time. However, the level of conviction that is supposed to be within me, the passion that I should have, the restlessness for Islam that is supposed to be within me, the state of witnessing with my own eyes that I should have, the state of *iḥsân* that is supposed to be within me – all this I do not have.

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Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* learnt that at that time there was a certain servant of Allâh ﷻ in Delhi who "sells" conviction and distributes the wealth of conviction. By just being in his company, a person's heart is ignited. By merely sitting with him, the state of conviction is created within a person. The desire to present himself in the service of this pious servant of Allâh ﷻ deprived him of the sweet sleep that he used to enjoy on his bed. He no longer enjoyed [sleeping on that bed]. He therefore departed [to meet that pious servant]. He remained in that *khânqâh* in such a way that he severed himself from everything and everyone. No sooner he carried that wealth

have within himself. He eventually gave up all that honour and status and went away. He said to himself: "As long as that conviction is not developed within me, I will not return." And so, Allâh ﷻ helped and assisted him.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

Those who go out for the cause of Allâh ﷻ, Allâh ﷻ helps them. Allâh ﷻ made him succeed in his quest and blessed him with that wealth for which he had been searching. He came back with such conviction and brought back such recognition [of Allâh ﷻ] which is igniting not just thousands but hundreds of thousands of hearts till this day. Even today, that state of îmân is being created.

Allâh ﷻ conferred him with this reward because of his true and sincere quest. Allâh ﷻ gave his this reward that He conferred him with conviction and also gave him the strength to convey this conviction to others. He thereby became the means for the conviction of thousands of people.

In like manner, a restlessness was experienced in the heart of Maulânâ Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. He perceived an internal void within himself – that I have everything, outwardly I have the clothing of *'ulamâ'*, I have the language of *'ulamâ'*, have the mind of *'ulamâ'*, libraries upon libraries are filled in my heart – however, the thing which I really have to have, that I do not have. I do not have that condition regarding which Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

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Allâh ﷻ says:

كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِيْ أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِيْنٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا.

"A good word like a good tree whose root is firmly established and whose branches are in the sky. It produces its fruit in every season by the order of its Sustainer." (Sûrah Ibrâhîm, verses 24-25)

Allâh ﷻ made Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* the physical portrayal of this verse. Over 150 years have passed but his name is still alive today. It is through him that Islam is still flourishing in those areas. This is the blessing of that sincerity and that quest with which Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* had gone to Shâh Ghulâm 'Alî Sâḥib *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*.

Hoping for the mercy of Allâh ﷻ

I had recited these verses at the beginning:

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللهِ أُولٰئِكَ يَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ اللهِ.

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Those that strive for ALLAH, they can hope for his mercy.

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– Allah Tôla is the most merciful day and night at all times.

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In this verse, Allâh ﷻ attributes mercy to Himself. He could have also said: أولئك يرجون الرحمة – they are the ones who can hope for mercy. The reason for attributing this mercy to Himself is so that people may come to know what the divine mercy would be like. It will not be any ordinary mercy. The kindness shown by an ordinary person is also kindness. The kindness of a person of authority will be more than that. The kindness of a king will be even more than the first two. But what can be said of the mercy of Allâh ﷻ! It will be as mentioned in a Ḥadîth:

ما لا عين رأت ولا أذن سمعت ولا خطر على قلب بشر

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard about, and it did not even cross the heart of a human."

No mind can reach there and no limits can be set to it. We cannot say that it is so far or that it is from here to there. It is not confined to an area, it does not have any measurement, it does not have any depth, it does not have any width nor any length. So much so, that it does not even have any name. Allâh ﷻ gives it as He wills. For example, He says with regard to fasting:

الصوم لي وأنا أجزي به

"Fasting is specifically for Me and I alone shall give the reward for it."

What reward will the person receive? I alone know what reward I will give. The person who shall receive the reward will be able to understand it. Or, the Being who is giving it, He knows.

In like manner, in the present verse أولئك يرجون رحمة الله – they are the ones who can hope for the mercy of Allâh ﷻ. In what form will this mercy of Allâh ﷻ manifest itself? How will it be when conferred to a group? How will it be when conferred to an individual? How will it be when conferred to the *ummah*? How will it be when conferred to the country? How will it be when

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"Surely those who believed and emigrated and strove in the cause of Allâh, they are the ones who can hope for the mercy of Allâh." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 218)

The word رحمة (mercy) is such a word that when it is attributed to Allâh ﷻ, it refers to an unbridled mercy which is neither specific nor limited, and which is free from all the restrictions of time and place. This mercy entails knowledge, recognition [of Allâh ﷻ], conviction, piety, beneficence, acceptance, love, miracles, extraordinary feats, help, support, victory, honour - all these things are included.

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But what is the condition for this mercy?

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The conditions are îmân, emigration (*hijrah*) and jihâd. These three conditions will have to be met and thereafter أولئك يرجون رحمة الله comes. The word أولئك is brought first. In other words, it is they who can hope for the mercy of Allâh ﷻ. It is they who can be eligible for the mercy of Allâh ﷻ. It is they who can wait for it…However, there has to be a thirst first of all. There has to be a quest. You should perceive some shortcoming within yourself. If this condition is fulfilled, guidance will itself come forward from Allâh ﷻ. When a person has the inspiration to "strive in the cause of Allâh ﷻ", he shall possess the attributes and qualities of Imâm Ghazzâlî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Maulânâ Khâlid Rûmî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and the Saḥâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. All praise is due to Allâh ﷻ alone, the Sustainer of the worlds.

> "The fact of the matter is that without personal endeavour and effort, and without personal determination, the true fruits of Islam and the knowledge of Islam cannot be acquired…The value that Islam has in the sight of Allâh ﷻ - it is against the self-respect of Islam and of Allâh ﷻ that it be given to someone without any quest and search from his side. Nevertheless, Allâh ﷻ has connected guidance and mercy to efforts and endeavours for His cause."

The safeguarding of Islamic borders

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

> "O believers! Be patient, and remain firm in confronting [the enemy] and persevere. And continually fear Allâh so that you may reach your goal." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 200)

Allâh ﷻ says: "O you people who have brought îmân! Remain patient and create an atmosphere of patience. Create an environment of patience. Instruct each other to be patient. Encourage each other to remain patient. And remain firm. Safeguard the borders. Remain firm on the borders. And fear Allâh ﷻ. Be cautious. Consider Allâh ﷻ to be present and watching whatever you are doing. So that you may be successful."

The meaning of صبر – patience

The first order in this verse, the first address in this verse and the first thing that is commanded in this verse is this: O believers! Remain patient. The word صبر is an Arabic word. It happens that a word of one language goes to another language. It undertakes a very lengthy journey. The journey is one of place, i.e. that word comes from a very distant place and goes to a very distant place. The journey is also one of time. It may have come a thousand years ago. When did the Arabic language come to India? And when was this word صبر included in the Indian language? And when was it adopted by the Muslims [of India]? When did they start using it in their writing? When did they start using it in their conversations? Twelve hundred years must have passed by now.

Now when any word goes to another language and undertakes a lengthy journey, reaching its destination in a particular time, and reaches a people who have come very much later, then

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some differences creep into the meaning of the word. Or, the meaning becomes limited. In other words, that word must have been very broad [in meaning], it must have been very wide, it may have encompassed a very huge field or area, it may have encompassed all aspects of life, it may have encompassed all departments of life – and now it remains limited and restricted. The word صبر is also from among such words!

When a few rights of a person are trampled upon or when some injustice is done to him, he resorted to patience. The meaning of patience would thus mean that if any grief afflicts you, if any calamity afflicts you, if any injustice is done to you or if you experience any difficulty – you should not cry too much, you should not complain too much! [This is the meaning of صبر in our language]. However, the meaning of صبر is much wider in the Arabic language. It means – to remain firm, to be strong, to face or combat [whatever difficulty you are experiencing], to abstain from moving from your position, to abstain from giving up your principles – these are the meanings of صبر in Arabic.

The wisdom behind the word صابروا

In this verse, the word اصبروا is followed by the word صابروا. The wisdom and secret behind instructing the believers to exercise صابروا after اصبروا needs reflection and pondering over. When it comes to the life of nations and religions, and the rise and fall of nations, mere individual patience and fortitude is not sufficient. There is a need for collective patience, steadfastness, courage and perseverance, and a general atmosphere and milieu of these qualities. For this, the need is that every individual should be a source of strength and support for the other. An individual has to be patient and steadfast himself, and at the same time he must invite others towards patience and steadfastness and convey these qualities to them. His life, his

îmân, his conviction, his patience, his reliance [on Allâh ﷻ], his courage and determination, his lofty character must all be a means of creating confidence in others and a guiding light for them. By merely looking at him, feet that are slipping must be able to become steadfast, depressed spirits and low courage must become lofty and fortified. In such an environment, to say or do things that show lack of courage or lack of patience must become so difficult and be considered to be such a flaw just as it is so important to teach patience, courage, perseverance and steadfastness in an environment of doubts and uncertainties.

Allâh ﷻ says: يا أيها الذين آمنوا - O you people who have îmân! اصبروا - Resort to patience and perseverance. After this, you see the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân. Those who have a taste of Arabic know that a word that comes on the scale of مفاعلة is rarely applied to things that are intransitive or individual in nature. It generally comes for words that are transitive in nature. For example, the word مقاتلة will mean "to fight each other", the word محاربة will mean "to go to war with each other", the word مناصرة will mean "to help each other". However, in this verse, the word صبر – patience – which is an individual act, an individual operation and an individual way has been brought on the scale of مفاعلة. So, the word صابروا will mean – create an environment of patience, teach patience to others, display your strength of fortitude and valour, your bravery and patience. You must be able to bear all this. In Urdu, one meaning of "to bear" is this – "Okay, brother, it has already happened. What can we do? We have no alternative [but to bear this]." This should not be the case.

You may have borne and tolerated the matter but thereafter you have remained the same as before. The strength of your îmân is still the same. Your beliefs are still the same. The nature of your trust in Allâh ﷻ is still the same. Your belief in Allâh ﷻ

some differences creep into the meaning of the word. Or, the meaning becomes limited. In other words, that word must have been very broad [in meaning], it must have been very wide, it may have encompassed a very huge field or area, it may have encompassed all aspects of life, it may have encompassed all departments of life – and now it remains limited and restricted. The word صبر is also from among such words!

When a few rights of a person are trampled upon or when some injustice is done to him, he resorted to patience. The meaning of patience would thus mean that if any grief afflicts you, if any calamity afflicts you, if any injustice is done to you or if you experience any difficulty – you should not cry too much, you should not complain too much! [This is the meaning of صبر in our language]. However, the meaning of صبر is much wider in the Arabic language. It means – to remain firm, to be strong, to face or combat [whatever difficulty you are experiencing], to abstain from moving from your position, to abstain from giving up your principles – these are the meanings of صبر in Arabic.

The wisdom behind the word صابروا

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îmân, his conviction, his patience, his reliance [on Allâh ﷻ], his courage and determination, his lofty character must all be a means of creating confidence in others and a guiding light for them. By merely looking at him, feet that are slipping must be able to become steadfast, depressed spirits and low courage must become lofty and fortified. In such an environment, to say or do things that show lack of courage or lack of patience must become so difficult and be considered to be such a flaw just as it is so important to teach patience, courage, perseverance and steadfastness in an environment of doubts and uncertainties.

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being the absolute power is still the same. You are therefore commanded – وصابروا – create an environment of patience. In other words, a canopy of patience should be visually seen above you. The clouds of patience must remain over your heads. Whoever sees you must be able to say: "This nation [of Islam] has a very strong sense of fortitude. It has great strength in combating [difficulties and hardships]. However, based on some wisdom, in waiting for the help of Allâh ﷻ, for the sake of human love and brotherhood, for the sake of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the land, and in order not to transgress the limits – it is waiting for an appropriate time." They should not think that we have accepted whatever they say. That we have fallen. That we have fallen to their feet [in submission and servitude]. No! وصابروا – an air of patience must encompass everything. It should be known that this nation has great strength to fight [and combat its opponents]. This strength to fight must not be confined to outside attacks but for internal attacks as well. The soul also desires to strike and that the enemy be killed. However, the person has kept it in control. He is concerned about the general well-being of the people. The well-being of the country is before him. The rights of his neighbours are before him. The repugnance of oppression and blood-shedding is before him. The strength of his îmân is keeping him in check. His îmân is stopping him. The training that he has received, the perfect example of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and the Sahâbah ﷺ that is before him are all stopping him. If not, if he were to come onto the battlefield, he could also demonstrate what he could do.

The history of the world shows us what a small group, what a minority and what a few individuals can accomplish. They completely destroyed and annihilated countries upon countries. They reduced them to dust. وصابروا – patience alone is not sufficient. You are a nation; not an individual. Injunctions

concerning a nation are applicable to you. The instructions of Allâh ﷻ are applicable to you. The instructions of Rasûlullâh ﷺ are applicable to you. The perfect example of Rasûlullâh ﷺ is before you. You cannot act according to your whims and fancies.

You may be overcome by anger and you may have gone into a rage. You therefore got up and burnt the house of your neighbour and near one. You burnt it in order to give vent to your anger and to cool your anger. In order to cool one's anger, a fire is not lighted. There are wiser, kinder, more prudent and more sensible ways of going about things.

This is a miracle of the Qur'ân that even today, it seems that this verse was revealed for us Muslims of India. That O believers! Remain patient. Remain steadfast. Become a firm wall. Become like a fort in the face of all these disturbances, these volatile conditions, these attacks, these transgressions, these acts of violence, these bloodsheds, this animalistic behaviour and this carnage.

A fortification for the protection of Islam

Allâh ﷻ then says: ورابطوا – and remain firm on the fortifications. A رباط refers to a safe and secure place wherein people could get together and live. ورابطوا – remain firm, become a wall, you should appear like a fort before them [your enemy]. At the end of this, what does Allâh ﷻ say? This is the difference between the instruction of a commander, a political leader, a political thinker and philosopher and the instruction of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. If it was someone else, he would have merely said: يـــا أيهـــا الذين آمنوا اصبروا وصابروا. If it was someone else, he may have added ورابطـــوا – and remain firm, become a wall of lead, become a mountain. However, the words واتقـــوا الله – these will only be said by Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. This is the

difference between this religion which has come from Allâh ﷻ and conveyed to us by the Messenger ﷺ and that philosophy, that leadership and that authority which a person offers to us on the basis of his experience, his circumstances, his desires, and according to his nation and group. There is a difference between the two. No one apart from Allâh ﷻ, His Messenger ﷺ and His Book [the Qur'ân] will tell us واتقوا الله – and fear Allâh ﷻ. Was this the occasion to say واتقوا الله?!! We were instructed to remain patient. Patience means that when someone attacks you, someone commits an excess against you, someone oppresses you [then you bear all this]. On such occasions, you cannot be told to fear Allâh ﷻ. You could be said this in the beginning or later on. You could be said this when giving the commentary of the Qur'ân. But at the time when there is a force in front of us – and that force is transgressing all limits – the chastity of women is not preventing it, the old and weak are not preventing it, their old age is not preventing it, the neighbourly rights of the neighbour are not preventing it, the knowledge of the literate ones is not preventing it – as you may have seen and read in the newspapers. Yet, we are told – واتقوا الله – and fear Allâh ﷻ. This can only be said by Allâh ﷻ and by His Messenger ﷺ.

After studying all the literature of the world, I have reached this conclusion that this is not the occasion to say واتقوا الله. This is the occasion to teach them [your enemy] a lesson. To make them submit in such a way that they fall to your feet. That you do not bother in the least about anything. That you transgress all the limits. That you do whatever you can. This is what is normally said on such an occasion. However, this is the miraculous nature of this divine Sharî'ah, these teachings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and this divine religion – that even on such an occasion when you have got the opportunity [to exact a revenge], you should fear Allâh ﷻ. You should not lose your guard like them. You should not transgress the limits like them. You should not

exhibit bestial behaviour like them. You should not turn away from the facts like them. You should not shut your eyes from the country, the environment, the society, the residence, the present and the future like them. This does not behove you. واتقوا الله – you are restricted to the limits of Allâh ﷻ and the limits of the Sharî'ah. You cannot go beyond these limits. My dear brothers! This is a complete instruction and guide for us.

We must inscribe this verse on our hearts

We all believe in the Qur'ân. We consider it to be the miracle of Allâh ﷻ, the miracle of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and the word of Allâh ﷻ. However, everyone does not know this fact. And they will not be taken to task for not knowing this fact. This is because there are different stages of knowledge. The Qur'ân is a miracle as a whole and it is a miracle as a part as well. In other words, every single verse is a miracle. It is our îmân that the Qur'ân is a miracle. However, very few people are aware of the fact that every verse of the Qur'ân is a miracle. And that its miraculous nature becomes manifest in different times and under different situations. It would also be disrespectful to compare it to the sun.

The verse of the Qur'ân which I recited to you is a perfect miracle. The condition of this verse is also this that from the time that it was revealed, no one could have counted how many times and under what circumstances it provided guidance during times of despondence. And how many times it must have injected a spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, rational and propagational strength in the Muslims.

If we place this verse on our heart, if our mind accepts it and if Allâh ﷻ gives us the divine inspiration, then it has a message for us for every era. Especially in these times, it appears to be such a miracle that it is as though it has been revealed in these very times and addressed to these very people.

The status and message of the Muslims

Allâh ﷻ says in the Qur'ân

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you possess Imân." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

This verse was revealed at a time when Islam was during its stage of infancy. At that time, no Islamic state had been established. Islam was confined and restricted to the Arabian peninsula and the Arabs. The Arabs were living a life of difficulty, constriction, poverty and destitution. Their food was generally restricted to dates, camel meat and barley bread. Their clothing was course and rough. Their houses were made of unbaked bricks and mud, or they were like ordinary tents. Due to their poverty and dire circumstances, they would get wet on a cold and rainy night and they would get chilled with cold – they were like shrivelled goats that were on the brink of death. None but the Qur'ân can paint a more accurate and truer picture of the dire circumstances in which the Arabs were. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَاذْكُرُوْٓا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِي الأَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ

"Remember the time when you were few and subdued in the land, fearing that people will snatch you away." (Sûrah al-Anfâl, verse 26)

So this was the condition of the Arabs. On the other hand, the Romans and the Persians were the rulers and sovereigns of the world. They were at the peak of their culture and civilization. The entire humanity of the world was under their control and subjugation. These two powers had divided the east and west between themselves. The east was under the subjugation of the Persians while the west was under the subjugation of the Romans. These two powers were enjoying the pleasures of life.

The "garment" of the world was broad and wide for them. There was an abundance of worldly necessities. The gates of sustenance were wide open. The universe was pouring the rains of generosity and munificence upon them. Countries and nations were in obedience to them. They were carrying out their orders by mere indication of the eyes. When their hands touched soil, it would turn to gold. It was their flag alone that was fluttering in the east and west.

In the midst of this gloom and darkness, this despondence and dejection, this pitch darkness wherein one could not even see one's own hand, wherein the slightest ray of hope and optimism could not be seen – the Qur'ân comes and challenges these two powers and blows the spirit of confidence and dignity into these robbed and beaten Arab Muslims:

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

The Qur'ân challenged the Quraysh of Mecca. It challenged the Roman and Persian empires. Sûrah Yûsuf was then revealed in order to console and comfort the commander, leader, Prophet and Messenger [Muhammad ﷺ] of that handful of Muslims. The Qur'ân announced:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ

"Surely there is in the story of Yûsuf and in the story of his brothers signs for those who inquire." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verse 7)

This sûrah [Yûsuf] then concludes in the following way:

حَتّٰى إِذَا اسْتَيْئَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّيَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلاَ يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ. لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الأَلْبَابِ ؕ مَا كَانَ حَدِيْثًا يُّفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ.

"Till the Messengers were getting despondent and they began thinking that a lie was said to them, Our help reached them. We then saved whom We willed. Our punishment is not averted from a sinning people. There is certainly a lesson in their stories for those who possess intelligence. This Qur'ân is no fabricated tale. Rather it is an affirmation of the Books which were before it, an exposition of everything, a guidance, and a mercy for those people who believe." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verses 110-111).

In like manner, this call of Sûrah Qaṣaṣ reverberated in the different horizons of the world. Allâh ﷻ revealed this sûrah in the dark atmosphere of oppression, tyranny, fear and terror.

طسم. تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ. نَتْلُوا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَّبَإِ مُوسَى وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ. إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلاَ فِي الأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَّسْتَضْعِفُ طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَآءَهُمْ. إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ. وَنُرِيْدُ أَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا فِي الأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَّنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِيْنَ. وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ.

"Tâ Sîn Mîm. These are verses of the manifest Book. We relate to you some incidents about Mûsâ and Pharaoh, setting forth the truth for those people who have conviction. Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and had made its people into sects. He had oppressed one group of them: slaughtering their sons and keeping alive their women. Surely he was of those who spread corruption. It is Our will to favour those who were oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and to make them heirs. And to establish them in the land. And We want to show to Pharaoh, Hâmân and their armies that which they feared at their [Banî Isrâ'îl's] hands." (Sûrah al-Qaṣaṣ, verses 1-6)

In the light of such dangerous and volatile circumstances, who could have had any hope for any good? Who could have had the heart and courage to make this prediction that this weak and insignificant group of Muslims, trodden by oppression and tyranny, devoid of all means, and empty-handed group would rise up from the horizon?! Could the greatest person in this world who possesses the furthest foresight and forethought, who possesses the greatest capabilities of confidence and

optimism ever make this prediction about this handful of Muslims and could he have made this proclamation???

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

However, this confidence and conviction filled the hearts of the Arabs with bravery, courage valour and enthusiasm. They were endowed with such eagle-like spirits that they looked at those mighty forces [Roman and Persian] as though they were lifeless dolls. These forces appeared like ordinary pillars and lifeless statues to them. The Qur'ân portrays these lifeless forces very accurately. Read these words of the Qur'ân:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ. وَإِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ

"When you see them their bodies please you. When they speak, you listen to their speech.' Yet they are like blocks of timber propped to a wall." (Sûrah al-Munâfiqûn, verse 4)

When these very weak and poor Arabs embraced the wealth of îmân and conviction and went out of the Arabian peninsula with pride and dignity, these mighty powers appeared insignificant before their eyes and they left them upside down.

These Arabs who came out to conquer the world – in fact, who came out as saviours of humanity – came out with this purpose that they have to liberate humanity from the clutches of savagery and barbarism and to remove it from that tyranny and oppression which had been continuing for centuries. It was then that the above-mentioned reality dawned upon them. When they went out in order to invite humanity to come out of the servitude of fellow man and to go towards the worship and obedience of Allâh ﷻ, when they went out in order to remove humanity from the constriction of this world and to go towards its wide expanse, and when they went out in order to remove humanity from the oppression and tyranny of religions towards

the justice and equity of Islam – then all these lifeless powers and forces appeared insignificant before them. These mighty powers and forces appeared like puppets before them. To drop their flags became like child's play. All their lofty buildings appeared like a heap of rubbish before them. Mighty armies appeared like the necks of goats and sheep before them. They considered them to be brainless and senseless animals that have neither capability of mercy nor honour, no desire for kindness nor compassion. They appeared to be sheep and wild animals in the form of humans.

The Qur'ân filled these illiterate Arabs with life, embellished these scattered Arabs with culture and civilization, filled these friendless Arabs with power, might and courage, it filled their cold and empty hearts with pride over this grand bounty [of Allâh ﷻ], with new ingredients of self-confidence, self-recognition, loftiness and elegance. It gave them the ability to recognize the special effects and consequences of these things. After being embellished with all these powers, they came out of the Arabian peninsula and subjugated the entire world. They did not do this because they wanted to become masters of the world or to enforce their rule and authority over them as those nations [Romans and Persians] had done. Rather, they came out in order to enable the wandering and aching humanity to submit before one Allâh ﷻ alone and to bring it under the shade of the justice and equity of Islam.

We are most worthy of this pride and confidence

At present, we are in the midst of the United Nations. Since we are leading several countries, we are most worthy of that pride and confidence which those Arabs had enjoyed. We are more worthy of being addressed by that heavenly voice which they had been addressed with:

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

At the time when this verse was revealed, the Arabs had no type of government. Even in the Arabian peninsula itself, they did not have any government. Over ten years had passed since the arrival of Islam but they were still crawling around like an infant and striking their hands and feet. However, Allâh ﷻ considered these Arabs to be worthy of being addressed by these words. So are we not worthy of being addressed by these divine words when we are ruling over forty nations and our numerous flags are fluttering on the headquarters of the United Nations?! Although we do not possess the atomic power and strength of this era, although we are subject to lethargy in the field of modern knowledge and civilization, because of our lethargy and indolence, our disunity and differences, because of our indifference to Islamic teachings, and because of our lack of appreciation of this great bounty of Islam we are not on the same level of these other countries – despite all this, we are still in a better condition than the Arabs of the first era who did not even have a single government. So what, are we not worthy of being addressed by this verse?:

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

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It is this îmân alone that is the value of a believer. It is îmân alone that is the essential value of a torch. If a torch has no batteries, it has no value. It is this îmân alone which is a permit that irrespective of which pan of the scale it is placed on, it will cause that pan to drop with its weight. It is this very permit which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had offered with the following blessed words on the occasion of the battle of Badr:

the justice and equity of Islam – then all these lifeless powers and forces appeared insignificant before them. These mighty powers and forces appeared like puppets before them. To drop their flags became like child's play. All their lofty buildings appeared like a heap of rubbish before them. Mighty armies appeared like the necks of goats and sheep before them. They considered them to be brainless and senseless animals that have neither capability of mercy nor honour, no desire for kindness nor compassion. They appeared to be sheep and wild animals in the form of humans.

The Qur'ân filled these illiterate Arabs with life, embellished these scattered Arabs with culture and civilization, filled these friendless Arabs with power, might and courage, it filled their cold and empty hearts with pride over this grand bounty [of Allâh ﷻ], with new ingredients of self-confidence, self-recognition, loftiness and elegance. It gave them the ability to recognize the special effects and consequences of these things. After being embellished with all these powers, they came out of the Arabian peninsula and subjugated the entire world. They did not do this because they wanted to become masters of the world or to enforce their rule and authority over them as those nations [Romans and Persians] had done. Rather, they came out in order to enable the wandering and aching humanity to submit before one Allâh ﷻ alone and to bring it under the shade of the justice and equity of Islam.

We are most worthy of this pride and confidence

At present, we are in the midst of the United Nations. Since we are leading several countries, we are most worthy of that pride and confidence which those Arabs had enjoyed. We are more worthy of being addressed by that heavenly voice which they had been addressed with:

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

At the time when this verse was revealed, the Arabs had no type of government. Even in the Arabian peninsula itself, they did not have any government. Over ten years had passed since the arrival of Islam but they were still crawling around like an infant and striking their hands and feet. However, Allâh ﷻ considered these Arabs to be worthy of being addressed by these words. So are we not worthy of being addressed by these divine words when we are ruling over forty nations and our numerous flags are fluttering on the headquarters of the United Nations?! Although we do not possess the atomic power and strength of this era, although we are subject to lethargy in the field of modern knowledge and civilization, because of our lethargy and indolence, our disunity and differences, because of our indifference to Islamic teachings, and because of our lack of appreciation of this great bounty of Islam we are not on the same level of these other countries – despite all this, we are still in a better condition than the Arabs of the first era who did not even have a single government. So what, are we not worthy of being addressed by this verse?:

وَلاَ تَهِنُوْا وَلاَ تَحْزَنُوْا وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ

"Do not lose courage nor grieve, and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

It is this îmân alone that is the value of a believer. It is îmân alone that is the essential value of a torch. If a torch has no batteries, it has no value. It is this îmân alone which is a permit that irrespective of which pan of the scale it is placed on, it will cause that pan to drop with its weight. It is this very permit which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had offered with the following blessed words on the occasion of the battle of Badr:

اللهم إن تهلك هذه العصابة من أهل الإسلام لا تعبد

"O Allâh! If you destroy this handful of Muslims, You will not be worshipped forever on the surface of this earth."[1]

Rasûlullâh ﷺ understood that it was the time of turning and devoting oneself to Allâh ﷻ. Rasûlullâh ﷺ was bestowed with a sound intellect from Allâh ﷻ. Allâh ﷻ had bestowed him with the ability to accurately portray a situation. If the victory was based on physical strength and power or large numbers, then Islam and the Muslims would have no future. They would not exist on the surface of the earth. Those who participated in the battle of Badr were 313 in number. Their opponents numbered a fully-equipped army of 1000. How could this handful of Muslims gain victory over such a massive army? In this difficult hour, Rasûlullâh ﷺ turned to Allâh ﷻ in supplicating and beseeching Him. He offered his supplication in the divine court with the following words:

اللهم إن تهلك هذه العصابة من أهل الإسلام لا تعبد

"O Allâh! If you destroy this handful of Muslims, You will not be worshipped forever on the surface of this earth."

When we are proud and satisfied about our Islam, Islam will belong to us and we will belong to Islam. It is then that Allâh ﷻ will help and assist us, it is then that He will safeguard and protect us. Allâh ﷻ has promised this to us. And Allâh's ﷻ promise is never false. Allâh ﷻ says:

إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

"If you help Allâh, Allâh will help you. And He will keep your feet firm." (Sûrah Muhammad, verse 7)

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[1] *Sahîh Muslim.*

However, if we remain Muslims only in name and the essence of Islam is not found in us, then we will be a portrayal of the words of Amîr Shakîb Arsalân which he had written with regard to the old League of Nations: "The League of Nations is like a rising sea which is a sea just in name – in which there is no sign whatsoever of any water."

If we become a water-less sea, then may a thousand pities be on us. We should not hope for any help from Allâh ﷻ. It is only îmân that holds any weight in the court of Allâh ﷻ. It is only îmân that has any value. It is only îmân that is taken into consideration.

وَأَنْتُمُ الأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

"and you alone shall remain triumphant if you remain true believers." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 139)

The devoted servants of Islam

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ، فَمِنهُمْ مَّنْ قَضى نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ. وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلاً.

"Of the believers are many men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allâh; some of them have fulfilled their obligation and some of them are still waiting, without having changed [their resolve] in the least." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verse 23)

This verse of the Qur'ân

A complete era, a complete generation, a complete movement, a complete call, a complete truth, a complete valour and loyalty, to present Islam in an accurate form, to sacrifice everything for its sake – its entire history has come before me in a physical form.

There cannot be anything better that could be said in praise of the achievements of the *mujâhidûn*. This verse not only reminds us of that era [of the Sahâbah ﷺ] but also offers an example for the Muslims till the day of resurrection. It shows what the status of a Muslim is, what the duty of every Muslim is in his respective time and era, and what he is responsible for. What type of bounties are showered upon him from Allâh ﷻ? How can he become eligible for acceptance in the court of Allâh ﷻ? It seems that this verse presents a perfect sample before the Muslims. Allâh ﷻ says:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ

The group of believers is very large. It is a very wide circle. Allâh ﷻ specifies that within this circle of believers there are a few people of valour and courage. In fact, we can translate these words as: there are many people of îmân. They are all fortunate. They have conviction in the promise of Allâh ﷻ. And

there are such valiant, courageous and spirited men "who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allâh".

فَمِنهُمْ مَّنْ قَضى نَحْبَهُ

From among them are those who have completed their time and have gone to Allâh ﷻ. They shall be rewarded by Allâh ﷻ.

وَالآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَّأَبْقى

"The hereafter is better and everlasting." ومنهم من ينتظر – there are those whose time has not come as yet. They are waiting. They are steadfast on their promise. وما بدلوا تبديلا – they have not changed in the least.

The whole of Islam is actually a promise and a covenant

What I would like to say here is that this verse entails the praise of Islam. This is the touchstone and standard for the Muslims of the first century. It is also an example worthy of emulation for those who will be coming till the day of resurrection. It is a standard for them. It is a mandate from Allâh ﷻ. In reality, a Muslim is not one who has merely recited the *kalimah*. Obviously, we will refer to him as a Muslim. We will not doubt his Islam. We will respect a person who recites the *kalimah* and we will look up to him with esteem. However, Islam does not end with the mere recitation of the *kalimah*. A child is born to a Muslim family. The *'aqîqah* (slaughtering of two sheep for a male or one sheep for a female, and removing of the hair from the head on the seventh day after the child is born) is made for this child. He is then referred to as a Muslim. He himself refers to himself as a Muslim. But this is not enough. Instead, he has to be:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ

He must have made a promise and covenant with Allâh ﷻ. This [*kalimah*] is a covenant with Allâh ﷻ. The covenant is that we shall live our lives in accordance with the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ. He alone is the creator and sustainer of this world. He alone can provide benefit and cause harm. He alone bestows honour and causes disgrace. We believe in Him alone to be the real doer and the real sovereign. The *kalimah*

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

is also a covenant and an announcement. We are announcing both verbally and physically that Allâh ﷻ alone is the creator and sustainer of this world.

أَلاَ لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالأَمْرُ

"Listen! To create and to command is His work alone." (7: 54)

He is the creator of the universe and its controller as well. He did not merely create it and leave it in that condition. Nor did He hand over its affairs to someone else in the sense that whatever happens now is all as a result of man's endeavours, his results, his opportunities and that he has placed the ability to benefit or harm in the different things. No. It is not like this. Allâh ﷻ is the master of every single atom. Even a single leaf cannot move without His permission. Not a single atom can move from its place. Nothing can be accomplished and no change can take place in this world. Neither can fortunes change nor circumstances change as long as He does not will the same and as long as He does not command the same.

The fact of the matter is that Islam is a pact and a covenant. We now have to look at this covenant. This covenant entails our understanding the creator and controller of this universe. That we accept Him as the absolute master. That our fortunes lie in His control alone. That we believe in Him alone as the provider of benefit and the cause of harm. That we do not submit before

anyone apart from Him. That we do not stretch out our hands of supplication to anyone but Him. This is a covenant. The whole of Islam is actually a promise and a covenant. We now have to see how many people are there who fulfil this covenant and how many are there who make this covenant and thereafter forget it. We too have made a covenant and forgotten it. The examples of the Sahâbah ﷺ are before us. When they recited the *kalimah*, they did not bother about their lives, their wealth, their wives and families, their honour and humiliation, their health, their sustenance and possessions, their praise or dispraise – they did not bother about anything.

This is something which the Muslims have to understand – especially during these times of trials and tribulations. This is the Islam which Allâh ﷻ bestowed upon us, through which He has favoured us. Islam does not mean that you merely say that you are a Muslim, that you have a Muslim name, that you have a society like that of Muslims, that your house is similar to that of the Muslims, that you go occasionally or regularly to the mosque. Rather, it is a covenant, it is a challenge to the time that we are Muslims. We are Muslims in our belief system. We are Muslims in our acts of worship. We are Muslims in our character. We are Muslims in our dealings. We are Muslims in our community life. We are bound to the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ in all our relations: relations between husband and wife, between father and son, between brother and brother, between neighbour and neighbour, etc. We will do as though we know nothing – we will first see what the injunction of Allâh ﷻ is on this occasion. If, by following this injunction of Allâh ﷻ, all our possessions are taken away, all our earnings are taken away, all our capital is taken away, and we have to beg for every single morsel of food – even then we will follow this injunction of Allâh ﷻ. This is true Islam. Islam is not merely the name of a particular nation. It is not merely the name of a civilization. Islam does not entail a particular race of people of

a particular place who enjoy certain privileges and are known by a particular name – as is prevalent today. From the very beginning till the very end, Islam is a pact, a promise and a covenant. It is an announcement with Allâh ﷻ. The absolute, worthy of practise and worthy of reflection thing will be that thing which Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ order, that thing which Rasûlullâh ﷺ explains – that which Allâh ﷻ orders and that which Rasûlullâh ﷺ explains or that which is the example of Rasûlullâh ﷺ - we must practise on it. If we have to give up all our properties and possessions, all our monetary benefits and all our comforts – in fact, even if we become a target of rebuke to the extent that it becomes difficult to live our life in that place – then the ultimate humiliation is that we are looked down upon in any country (where conditions are always different), in fact, not only are we looked down upon, but we are treated like criminals who are about to be crucified – we are treated not only like a hostile nation, but like a disloyal and treacherous nation, job opportunities are shut upon us, the education of our children becomes difficult, in fact, it even becomes difficult for us to acquire the basic means of sustenance – even then we will do only that which Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ order us to do.

Allâh ﷻ says: من المؤمنين رجال – from among the believers are those brave men, those courageous people who صـــدقوا – were an example of those who are true to their word. When the Qur'ân uses the word صـــدقوا – there is no limit to its all-encompassing nature, to its depth and to its power. There is no way of measuring it. When the word صـــدقوا is used, it means that they proved true to their word hundred percent. There was no flattery in it, no hypocrisy in it, no checking whether it is feasible or not, no delay in it – there was nothing of this sort. The most honourable thing that could be bestowed from the most honourable being [Allâh ﷻ] and the best affirmation that

could be bestowed – are all found in these words. It would not have been surprising if those people on whom this verse was revealed had been overpowered by some sort of ecstasy or frenzy. If they gave away all their possessions – and they did so – then Allâh ﷻ bears testimony to this: صدقوا ما عاهدوا الله عليه – they proved true to the promise which they made to Allâh ﷻ and they did not falter in the least from their position.

What is the condition of us Muslims today? We look as to how much of leeway we have in a particular matter. What is the extent of the profit and the loss? How much of benefit is there and how much of loss is there? Will it earn us fame or disgrace? Will there be any political consequences and economical hardship in it? Will the future of our family and children not become uncertain? Will we not fall into danger? The limit of all this is: will we be able to win the election or not? Will we get some position or not? Will we be able to live in the country with honour or not? These are all the imaginary things that hold no weight whatsoever in the court of Allâh ﷻ.

فمـــنهم من قضى نحبه – from among them were those who reached the ultimate goal. When they completed their time, they passed away and attained the status of martyrdom. They sacrificed their last drop of blood. ومـــنهم مـــن ينـــتظر – and there were some whose time had not come from Allâh ﷻ as yet. This is something that concerns fate. The time of death is fixed. Martyrdom is also a type of death; its time is also fixed. We see such incidents wherein a person left no stone unturned in waging jihâd and fighting in the cause of Allâh ﷻ. Khâlid ibn al-Walîd ﷺ was a dare-devil in war. There was nothing that could stop him. There was no hesitance whatsoever in him. However, Allâh ﷻ keeps him in one piece – safe and sound. He was victorious in so many battles! The medals of so many battles are around his neck! فمنهم من قضى نحبه – there are those who have completed their time. The time that Allâh ﷻ had fixed for

them, that time has come. It came while they were engaged in jihâd or when they were at home. ومنهم من ينتظر – there are others who are still waiting. There is no shortcoming or weakness on their part. They are fighting courageously in the battlefield of jihâd. They are inviting martyrdom [to overtake them]. But the time of their martyrdom has not come as yet. Allâh ﷻ returns them safe and sound from the battlefield to their homes. But they are still waiting. وما بدلوا تبديلا – they have not changed [their resolve] in the least.

This is the example for us. If we are asked today – despite all my inadequacies, lack of practise, despite all my weaknesses and sins – if I am asked to write down a charter and a covenant for the Muslims, a charter and a covenant that would remain before them, then I will write this down:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ، فَمِنهُمْ مَّنْ قَضى نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ. وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلاً.

"Of the believers are many men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allâh; some of them have fulfilled their obligation and some of them are still waiting, without having changed [their resolve] in the least." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verse 23)

What is Islam in essence? Islam is not merely having a Muslim name or adopting the Muslim way of life. This alone is not Islam. Rather, Islam is a covenant stating: O You who are present and watching! O You who are fully aware of the unseen! O the Creator of both the worlds! You bear testimony, You remain witness to this fact that we shall give preference to the Sharî'ah over our natural inclinations. We shall give preference to the Sharî'ah over customs and rituals. We shall give preference to the Sharî'ah over profits and benefits. We shall first ask about the injunctions of the Shafî'ah and then act. Allâh ﷻ has said these words [the above verse] in reference to a few steadfast and choice Sahâbah ﷺ and lofty people of the

first generation of Muslims. However, these words are applicable till the day of resurrection.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ

The believers are those brave people who have proved true to the promise which they made. This is the order of Allâh ﷻ to us. This is our charter. That after reciting the *kalimah* – لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله – we have made a promise and a covenant. The covenant is this: that we shall give preference to the words of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, we shall give preference to whatever has come to us from Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, we shall give preference to the demand of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. We shall give preference to this over all real, certain, imaginary and possible dangers and losses.

This is the meaning of Islam. Islam is that which has come to us from Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. It is related to beliefs, transactions, acts of worship, rites and customs, customs of marriage, laws of inheritance, husband-wife relations, and relations with one's neighbours as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION AND WORSHIP

Da'wah is not only connected to worship but to the entire *dîn*. This connection is like the connection between rain and plants. When it rains profusely, the plants also grow profusely. When there is no rain, the land becomes a barren field.

In like manner, if *da'wah* exists, worship and all other departments of *dîn* remain established. Together with this, the spirit of *dîn* also remains established.

When the system of *da'wah* continues in a particular era, the people's passion for *dîn* flourishes, the perception to fulfil compulsory duties is awakened and there is the concern to fulfil the rights of others.

But when the system of *da'wah* comes to an end, the growth of the above-mentioned things also comes to an end. In such a case, *dîn* becomes like a dry tree – which neither grows nor bears fruit.

Therefore, for the continued existence of *dîn* and to create the capability for *dîn*, *da'wah* is necessary.

Without *da'wah*, deeds can neither take root nor can they sprout.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

Religion is a perfect system

اَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلاَمَ دِيْنًا

"Today I have perfected for you your religion, and completed upon you My favour, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 3)

When was this verse revealed?

This verse was revealed on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Hajjatul Widâ'*) on the day of 'Arafah, on a Friday at the time of *'asr*. After the revelation of this verse, Rasûlullâh ﷺ remained in this world for just 81 days. It is narrated in authentic Traditions that a Jew came to 'Umar ؓ and said to him: "O Amîr al-Mu'minîn! There is verse in your Book which you recite. Had such a verse been revealed to us, we would have made that day a day of festivity and we would have marked it as a day of celebration." 'Umar ؓ said to him: "That verse was not revealed on a single day of festivity but on two occasions of festivity: it was revealed on a Friday and on the day of 'Arafah. *Al-Hamdulillâh*, both these days are days of *'îd* (festivity) for us.

The fact of the matter is that this verse is so important, it is so worthy of pride and gratitude, and it is such a historical reminder that its reminder ought to be celebrated till the day of resurrection.

What is the meaning of perfect?

The word "perfect" means that something is so complete and sufficient with regard to its purpose, object, principles and in accordance with necessities that there is no room whatsoever for any addition to it nor any need to do so. If there is no room for any addition but there is a need for some addition, then despite its outward completion, it is imperfect and incomplete.

The meaning of religion being perfect is that it is totally perfect according to the principles laid down by the being [Allâh ﷻ] who perfected it and totally perfect according to the needs and necessities of those who are acting on it.

Religion is a perfect system

Dîn is a perfect system. It refers to a complete entity. It does not refer to a part. All the following entities comprise *dîn*: beliefs, deeds, acts of worship, transactions, the rights of Allâh ﷻ, the rights of one's fellow humans. It also includes the incumbency of salâh. It also includes the distribution of inheritance in accordance with the laws laid down by the Qur'ân.

وأتممت عليكم نعمتي – and I completed upon you My favour. The true Muslim (who is actually being addressed here) has been showered with many favours from Allâh ﷻ. The greatest of these favours is that He blessed him with îmân and Islam. This is the favour of Allâh ﷻ upon us and not our favour [to Him]. Allâh ﷻ says:

يَمُنُّوْنَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوْا قُلْ لاَّ تَمُنُّوْا عَلَيَّ إِسْلاَمَكُمْ بَلِ اللهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلإِيْمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِيْنَ.

"They consider it a favour to you that they have embraced Islam. Say: "Do not consider your Islam a favour to me. Rather, Allâh has done you a favour by guiding you to the path of îmân, if you are really true [in your claim to îmân]." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verse 17)

In reality, this is the religion bestowed by Allâh ﷻ alone. There are so many great scholars and so many noble and intelligent people in the world. Such people have been found in every era. Yet they have not been blessed with this wealth [of Islam] and they have not been able to understand such an easy concept. If we were to ponder, there were so many forefathers and parents of the Prophets and so many offspring of the Prophets who were deprived of this Islam. Look at the father of Ibrâhîm ﷺ

and the son of Nûh ﷺ. We should die out of joy over this bounty and may our heads not rise from the ground in showing gratitude for this bounty. This favour was not bestowed on the Bedouins only but to the entire Arab nation, to all the Sahâbah ﷺ and to every true Muslim till the day of resurrection.

Islam and îmân do not entail just one favour. Rather they are a collection of many favours. In other words, Allâh ﷻ bestowed us with true Islam, He created us humans from among the animals, He blessed us with His recognition and belief in His oneness, He saved us from the worship of anything and everything of this world, He showed us the purpose of life, He instilled in us the concern and worry for our destiny, He enabled us to hold on to the Sunnah of the most perfect guide [Muhammad ﷺ], He saved us from the punishment of hell and remorse of the hereafter, He made us eligible for the bounties of this world and the hereafter. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَآءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا ج وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ.

"Remember the bounty of Allâh upon you when you were enemies of one another, then He cast love in your hearts, now you became brothers by His grace. You were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. In this way Allâh expounds His verses to you so that you may be guided." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 103)

Rasûlullâh ﷺ said the following words in a huge gathering of the *Ansâr*:

أما أتيتكم ضالا فهداكم الله بي، وعالة فأغناكم الله، وأعداء فألف بين قلوبكم

"Did I not come to you while you were astray, and so Allâh guided you through me? Were you not poor, and so Allâh made you rich? Were you not enemies, and so Allâh united your hearts?"

This was their reply to these questions:

لله ورسوله المن والفضل

"Without doubt, this is the favour and bounty of Allâh and His Messenger."

ورضيت لكم الإسلام دينا: and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion – for your life and your death as well:

يٰأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ.

"O believers! Continuously fear Allâh as He ought to be feared and do not die except as Muslims." (Âl Imrân, verse 102)

This is the very same advice which Ibrâhîm ﷺ and Ya'qûb ﷺ had given to their children:

وَوَصّٰى بِهَا اِبْرٰهٖمُ بَنِيْهِ وَيَعْقُوْبُ ؕ يٰبَنِيَّ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمُ الدِّيْنَ فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ.

"This was the bequest which Ibrâhîm made to his sons, and so did Ya'qûb: "O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you the religion, so you should never die except as Muslims." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 132)

Remember! In order to die as a Muslim it is necessary to live as a Muslim. This is because there is no fixed time for death. We therefore have to remain as Muslims all the time. If death comes upon us at any time, it must be while we are in a state of Islam. In order to live as Muslims, it is necessary for us to have Islamic beliefs, Islamic customs, an Islamic society and Islamic company. If not, the following verse will apply:

وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ.

"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him. And in the hereafter he is doomed." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 85)

The majesty, splendour, favour and bounty that is shown in the following announcement:

اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا

demands that apart from our beliefs and acts of worship, we should be personally responsible in our morals, transactions, culture, ways of life; and that we should remain bound to

purely Islamic teachings, the guidance of the Qur'ân and the principles and limits that have been laid down in the Qur'ân. And that we should not imitate the west in a social and cultural way nor should we live in its shadow.

Together with principles and beliefs, Allâh ﷻ bestowed us with a separate social order and a distinguished culture and civilization. We have to be an example of this wherever we are, in every era and all the time.

Commencing in the name of Allâh who is extremely beneficent, most merciful

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

Commencing in the name of Allâh who is extremely beneficent, most merciful.

What is the message in bismillâh?

Everyone knows what *bismillâh* is and when it is recited. However, very few people have pondered over the message that is in *bismillâh*. Whenever an important task was undertaken, Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the Sahâbah ؓ, the elders of Islam and the noble *'ulamâ'* would commence by reciting *bismillâh*. Even here in India, you see that whether it is Maulânâ Âzâd or someone else, whether it is some great servant of the country and someone who has liberated the country – was also in the habit of reciting *bismillâh*. Even when we are about to eat, it is Sunnah to recite *bismillâh* first and then commence eating. If you have to commence any other task – be it big or small – you commence by saying *bismillâh*. However, ponder over this fact that when you are commencing by taking the name of Allâh ﷻ, Allâh ﷻ has numerous other names. ولله الأسماء الحسنى – the Qur'ân itself says that Allâh ﷻ has many beautiful names: He is *Jabbâr*, He is *Qahhâr* - He is mighty, He is powerful, He is omni-potent, He is all-majestic, He is perfect, He is possessor of beauty – He is everything. However, why have we been taught that when we commence any task we should do so by taking the name of Allâh and His two attributes of *ar-Rahmân* and *ar-Rahîm* - extremely beneficent and most merciful?

The direction of our life should be towards the Merciful

This is how the temperament is formed – not only the temperament of a Muslim but the temperament of humanity.

From among all the attributes of Allâh ﷻ, we have to particularly remember these two attributes that this task which we are commencing, we are doing so in the name of that Allâh who is extremely beneficent, most merciful. We could have said anything else at this point [of commencing this task]. We could have done so in the name of Allâh who is all mighty, who is omni-potent, who is all powerful, who has absolute authority, who is possessor of great might. However, the attributes of beneficence and mercy have been brought so that our lives may be moulded by Him and we understand that Allâh who created us, who has kept us alive, who is giving us this opportunity of living our lives, who has enabled us to live in a particular country, who has created us in a particular land, it is He who gives us food and drink. This is in fact the status and rank of this Allâh. However, He is extremely beneficent, He is most merciful, He is extremely kind. He thus specifies the direction of our life – that the direction of our life should be towards *ar-Rahmân*. We should realize that the Allâh by whom we have been created, whose servants we are, who gives us food and drink, who is safeguarding and protecting us, who has enabled us to live with each other – He is extremely beneficent, most merciful.

A Hadîth states that we should adopt the attributes of Allâh ﷻ. The attributes of Allâh which a person can adopt within himself and the character which he can adopt – those attributes of Allâh ﷻ have been given place and preference. In like manner, many other things could have been said in Sûrah al-Fâtihah.

It is from among those things that fall repeatedly on the ears - that are heard all the time. Look at the *adhân*. Doesn't everyone hear the *adhân*?! However, how many are there who ponder over the *adhân*, who ponder over it words, who ponder over its meaning? To have knowledge of something is very easy. To have complete control over it, to hear it all the time and see it

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all the time causes a barrier to fall, causes a veil to come in-between.

Just think: الحمد لله – all praises are due to Allâh. He is رب العالمين – the Sustainer of all the worlds; not of just one world, not of just one country, not of just one society, not of just one being, not of just one class, not of just one rank, not of just one level, not of just one standard. Rather, He is رب العالمين – the Sustainer of all the universe, of all the worlds – our world, the world of stars, the world of heavens, and various other worlds – so many continents and so many countries. All these are under the shade of Allâh's mercy. We are therefore taught that we should consider mercy, being happy at seeing each other, considering each other to be our fellow brother, to fulfil his need, to remove his pain, and to join him in his sorrow – we should consider all this to be our compulsory duty. We should consider this to be the status of Allâh ﷻ and the attributes of Allâh ﷻ. We have to make this our ideal. We have to make this our leader and our guide.

Our entire life is an act of worship

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَلَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

"Say: 'My salâh and my worship, and my living and my dying are for Allâh alone, who is the Sustainer of the worlds. He has no partner. To this I have been commanded and I am the foremost to surrender.'" (Sûrah al-An'âm, verses 162-163)

The meaning of worship

We should first of all understand the meaning of worship. What is the meaning of worship? Worship means fulfilling a task for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ, in accordance with the order of Allâh ﷻ, for the purpose of recompense and reward – it refers to every task done for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ. This is not sufficient. Instead, it has to be in accordance with the order of Allâh ﷻ and the teachings of the Sharî'ah. If any Sunnah is established with regard to this act, it will have to be fulfilled in accordance with the Sunnah. One must have the hope of recompense and reward. If any promises are made with regard to it, it will have to be fulfilled with full conviction [in the fulfilment of those promises]. This is the meaning of worship. This is what changes every habit into an act of worship. If this spirit is removed, then every act of worship is merely a habit, it is merely a routine – and one is left following one's desires.

Allâh ﷻ makes a very comprehensive statement:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَلَمِينَ

"Say: 'My salâh and my worship, and my living and my dying are for Allâh alone, who is the Sustainer of the worlds.'"

The differentiation that was found in previous religions

This was the differentiation that was found in the previous religions: first of all, it was not from Allâh ﷻ. During their times of retrogression, perversion and deviation, when distortions took place in religions and external influences gained the upper hand, the surroundings that were transferred from different nations, those who accepted this religion, their culture, their anthologies and their genealogical influences took precedence over religion – then the people of religion made this differentiation in religion: that worship would be for Allâh ﷻ while they were free in the rest of their engagements. They would do as they felt appropriate. They would institute whatever laws they wished and they will have freedom in doing so. Their purpose in doing this would not be for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ or to make Him happy. It would merely be in order to fulfil a need.

This differentiation reached such a level, that the following idiom became well known in Christian history: "Render unto God what is God's, and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." They thus caused a customary differentiation in religion. It is obvious that when such differentiation takes place, the share that is allotted to Allâh ﷻ will always be less. The share that is allotted to Caesar will be more.

تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَى

"This would then be an unfair distribution." (Sûrah an-Najm, verse 22)

The reason for this unfair distribution is that they would have an outward relationship with "Caesar" and they would also be fearing him. This would be as a result of not having true recognition [of Allâh ﷻ]. The outward forms of power which Caesar has and the authority which he wields are all before them. From a material point of view, they would perceive greater advantage in pleasing him.

As a result of all this, especially in Christianity (which is the last divine religion before Islam), beliefs and acts of worship were left confined to a very small section. On the other hand, their entire life became a worldly life, worship of materialism, worship of wealth and worship of power and might. The Christian – in his society and in the limits of his Christianity – was reduced to a refractory and incorrigible person. He would do whatever he felt was beneficial to him even though it may be in complete opposition to his religion. Religion was reduced to a dot – getting smaller and smaller – like a dot on a page. He would only be a Christian when he went to Church. If he were to go to church, it would only be on a Sunday. And for how long? [Just a short while]. Even when he goes there, there are more customs and rites in the church – do like this, sit like this, confess your sins in this way, sit like this before the priest. At the same time, some music is being played, something is being read – that is all. And after that, he is totally free!

Islam changed this completely

However, Islam and Rasûlullâh ﷺ changed this concept completely. Islam placed a person's entire life in the obedience and worship of Allâh ﷻ. It absorbed the entire life in the worship of Allâh ﷻ. Now, everything belongs to Allâh ﷻ. There is nothing for anyone apart from Allâh ﷻ. Without doubt, you have the freedom to eat and drink within certain limits:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللهِ الَّتِيْ أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ

"Say: 'Who has forbidden the beauty of Allâh which He created for His servants, and the good things of food?'" (Sûrah al-A'râf, verse 32)

You may eat and drink of the lawful things. However, whatever you do, you should first of all see what the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ are with regard to it. You should then do it with the intention

of acquiring the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ. As a result of this, yo entire life will become a worship.

Rasûlullâh ﷺ explicitly said:

إن صلاتي ونسكي ومحياي ومماتي لله رب العالمين

"My salâh (which is the highest form of worship), my servitude, my asceticism, my sacrifice, m life and my death are all for Allâh ﷻ."

This is a very great thing. It is sufficient for one's entire lif That that person whose life Allâh ﷻ placed for His worship an His love, who made it solely for His worship – it is th accepted servant [Muhammad ﷺ] of Allâh ﷻ who is saying this, his verbal utterance is then conveyed via the Qur'ân s that Muslims right till the day of resurrection may recite it an use it as a guiding light for themselves.

Say, (O Muhammad ﷺ)! إن صلاتي – my salâh, my worship, ونسكي – my sacrifice – this word نسك is also a very comprehensive word – my asceticism, my piety, my abstention from something, m not doing something, my sacrifice, ومحياي ومماتي – my living an my dying are all for Allâh ﷻ - لله رب العالمين.

Which Allâh? And why am I doing this? لا شريك له – He has n partner. So someone should have no partner with him. Th words لا شريك له have come here like a gem. Why am I handing over my salâh, my fasting, my eating and my drinking to Allâh ﷻ? It is because He has no partner whatsoever. If He had an partner, I would have said salâh is for Allâh ﷻ while food is from someone else. But since He has no partner whatsoever, when such a partner does not even exist; then why should I give something of mine to someone else? Everything belongs to Allâh ﷻ. Since He is one and has no partner, my life too has to be a single unit, my life too cannot be distributed into different

units. When my entire life becomes for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ, it becomes a single unit. And that single unit is…worship!

he says: this is what I have been لا شريك له وبذلك أمرت وأنا أول المسلمين: commanded with. I am the first one to accept this and I am the first person to submit myself.

These verses are very comprehensive and contain a manual and code for one's entire life within them. And they are a source of guidance for the Muslims till the day of resurrection.

The effect of ṣalâh on morals and inclinations

إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ تَنْهى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

"Surely ṣalâh restrains [man] from indecency and evil." (Sûrah al-'Ankabût, verse 45)

The effect that ṣalâh has in putting an end to evil characteristics, evils, acts of immorality, and the worship of temporary desires and lusts cannot be found in anything apart from the *kalimah tauḥîd*. The reason for this is that ṣalâh changes the direction of a person and gives him a new feeling, a new quest and a new mind. It removes him from contemptible and despicable deeds and conveys him towards lofty and noble deeds. تنهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر – it creates the love and desire for îmân in the person's heart and causes him to abhor and hate unbelief, immorality and disobedience.

However, all this can only be realized when the ṣalâh is a true ṣalâh:

أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك

"That you worship Allâh ﷻ in such a way that it is as though you are seeing Him. If you are unable to see Him, He is certainly seeing you."

The ṣalâh should be filled with the above concept. It should be filled with life, enthusiasm and power.

The fact of the matter is that in everything, there is something that is intransitive (لازم) and something that is transitive (متعدي). When something is intransitive, its action is restricted to it's self – it does not go beyond it's self. The intransitive nature of ṣalâh is that كأنه is the scene of each person – that the attribute of *iḥsân* must be created in the ṣalâh. If this person who is offering ṣalâh cannot imagine seeing Allâh ﷻ, then he should

imagine in his heart that Allâh ﷻ is certainly seeing him. This is the intransitive nature of ṣalâh.

Ṣalâh also has a transitive nature. How is that? This is in two ways: (1) it is transitive with regard to the person offering the ṣalâh, (2) and also transitive with regard to others. The transivity of ṣalâh is this: إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ تَنْهى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ – that when the ṣalâh comes to an end, it still remains transitive. The transivity of ṣalâh is that the ṣalâh restrains the person who has just offered his ṣalâh from indecency. When we take a transitive ṣalâh into consideration, we expect such a ṣalâh to restrain the person who has offered his ṣalâh from sinning. So this is the standard and the measure for a transitive ṣalâh:

إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ تَنْهى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

That when ṣalâh is offered, there must be no sin thereafter. If after offering the ṣalâh the urge to sin remains, and the person goes towards sin, then this ṣalâh will be intransitive. It is not transitive. If the person who offered his ṣalâh abstained from sin, this ṣalâh will be transitive with regard to him.

If this ṣalâh then has more attributes of transivity, then it will not be confined to him alone in the sense that it stops him alone from sinning. Rather, if that ṣalâh is correct, it would now be in conflict with that environment. There will now be a war between that ṣalâh and that environment. This ṣalâh would now prompt a person towards reformation, reminding, taking stock and reckoning [of the society].

You will therefore see that when Shu'ayb ﷺ invited his people towards *tauḥîd*, a life of righteousness and purity, and threatened them of the evil consequences of wrong doing, oppression, weighing and measuring less – they investigated and scrutinized his life in order to see what difference there was between him and the people. When they gauged the difference between the lawful and the prohibited, wickedness and

righteousness, obedience to Allâh and disobedience to Him, following the injunctions and not following them – then some of the intelligent ones from among his people realized that the thing which is causing all this in his life is his salâh. Once they realized this, they said to him:

يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلٰوتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ نَّتْرُكَ...

"O Shu'ayb! Is it your salâh that is ordering you that we leave..."

After relating this, the Qur'ân does not refute this question of theirs.

We learn from this that it is from salâh that these qualities are inculcated. This is the second aspect of salâh's transivity. The first transivity of salâh is that it prevents the person offering salâh from acts of indecency. The second transivity of salâh is that it prevents others from evils. If not, the people of Shu'ayb عليه السلام would not have recognized this. The fact that they recognized that it was the salâh of Shu'ayb عليه السلام that had separated them from him, shows this transitive nature of salâh.

The beauty and comprehensiveness of Sûrah al-Fâtihah and its influence on life

أَعُوْذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيْمِ

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ. مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ. إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ. اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ. صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لا غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّيْنَ.

"All praises are due to Allah who is the Sustainer of the worlds. Extremely beneficent, most merciful. Owner of the day of recompense. You alone we worship, and from You alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path. The path of those whom You have favoured. Upon whom neither Your anger befell nor were they gone astray."

This sûrah is a splendorous ruby of divine miracles and a unique example of the clear verses of the Qur'ân. If the most intelligent people of the world, if the litterateurs and writers of all nations, if the expert psychologists, if the teachers of morality and if the spiritual leaders were to all get together in order to prepare a theme which would be sufficient for all the classes of humanity despite the difference in their needs and wishes, and which they could fully express whatever is in their hearts in their acts of worship – they would not be able to prepare a theme like Sûrah al-Fâtihah which is sufficient for the satisfaction of every human group and every individual. Allâh ﷻ says the following with regard to this sûrah:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيْمَ

"We gave to you the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'ân." (Sûrah al-Hijr, verse 87)

"Praise" is a wonderful means

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ – these are very comprehensive words of gratitude and praise. These are from among those miraculous

and eloquent words that are not only extremely difficult to accurately translate to any language, but impossible.

"praise" is that wonderful means through which a loyal and grateful servant can commence his supplication and plea and open that exemplary place of standing and prostrating [i.e. salâh]. The person offering salâh then perceives that the Sustainer whose praise and eulogy he is singing and in whose worship he is engaged is not the Sustainer of merely a tribe and nation, not the Sustainer of merely a family and a people, and not the Sustainer of merely a place and a country. Rather, He is رب العالمين – the Sustainer of the worlds.

This revolutionary and new belief is an announcement of war against all those superficial and self-appointed compartmentalization which have committed a major oppression against humanity. In this way, the Muslim makes an announcement of two oneness's. It is on these two oneness's that the basis of peace and tranquillity of human society lies. It is on these two pillars that Islam starts to build the new edifice of humanity. One is the oneness of the Creator and Maker of humanity. The other is the oneness of the Originator and Inheritor of the human race. In so doing, the unity of the human race without any distinctions in colour, race, nation, country is established. This is because every human has a two-fold bond with the next human: (1) in a spiritual and essential way – in the sense that the Sustainer of all is One, (2) in a physical and secondary way – in the sense that they are all the children of one father (Âdam ﷺ).

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّنِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ تَسَآءَلُوْنَ بِهٖ وَالْاَرْحَامَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا.

"O people! Continually fear your Sustainer Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate, and out of the two He spread out many men and women. Continually fear Allâh through

Whom you ask of one another, and be mindful of your relatives. Surely Allâh is watchful over you." (Sûrah an-Nisâ, verse 1)

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقَاكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ.

"O people! We created you from a male and a female. And We made you into groups and tribes so that you may recognize each other. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allâh is the most righteous of you. Allâh is all-knowing, all-aware." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verse 13)

Rasûlullâh ﷺ said the following in explaining and elaborating the above-quoted injunctions and principles:

"Allâh ﷻ has removed from you the fanaticism of the days of ignorance and the pride over your forefathers. Now there [are just two types of people]: righteous Muslims or unfortunate sinners and transgressors. All humans are the progeny of Âdam ﷺ, and Âdam ﷺ was created from soil. No Arab enjoys any superiority over a non-Arab except by virtue of piety." (*Tirmidhî*)

Being fully cognizant of Allâh's attribute of "mercy"

From among the noble attributes of Allâh ﷻ which a person offering salâh has already brought îmân on, he first of all bears in mind His attribute of "mercy" – الرحمن الرحيم. There can therefore be no better attribute for this place and this context. This is that time when a Muslim prostrates himself before Allâh ﷻ with full humility, worship, supplication, entreaty, repentance, remorse, and being fully cognizant of his deprivation and poverty. This is the occasion for hope and optimism. It is not the occasion for gloom and pessimism.

He then thinks about the hereafter, the day of reward and punishment – مالك يوم الدين – that day when the absolute sovereignty and highest authority of Allâh ﷻ will manifest

itself with all its might and splendour. No king, no leader and no minister will be able to utter a word in His presence.

لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ؟ لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

"Whose sovereignty is it on this day? It is Allâh's who is one, who holds absolute authority." (Sûrah al-Mu'min, verse 16)

At such a time, the person renews and refreshes belief in the hereafter in his heart. This belief in the hereafter is the source of all fear, the fear of accountability and guard over the soul and the mind. A Muslim who lives in a world filled with urges and the intense need that he has for this belief and conviction – such a Muslim does not need any proof and evidence [in other words, mere belief in the hereafter is sufficient to keep him in check].

The person then says in that Arabic language (in which the Qur'ân was revealed and which establishes the universal and leading language of salâh) – he says with full force and in an eloquent manner that he "does not worship anyone but Allâh and he does not desire the help of anyone but Allâh's." - إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ.

Worship and seeking assistance

Life is actually another name for worship and seeking assistance. It is through this that a relationship is established between one human and another human, between the weak and the strong, between the poor and the rich, between the ruled and the ruler and between the worshipper and the worshipped. If these two [worship and seeking assistance] are made for Allâh ﷻ alone, then all the shackles and chains of life will be broken to bits on their own. Polytheism and all other temptations will come to an end. This is that biggest covenant and announcement which a Muslim repeatedly makes day and night with his Allâh. A Muslim should ponder over what he is

saying [in this إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين]. His entire system of life outside salâh is compelling him all the time on two aspects: (1) submission and surrender, and (2) beseeching and seeking assistance. These are the very two things regarding which he had rebelled against previously.

Supplication for guidance

He then supplicates to Allâh ﷻ to guide him towards the straight path. اهدنا الصراط المستقيم – this is that guidance which is his greatest requirement and through which the splendour of paradise is established. This is that guidance which, if a person is deprived of, nothing else has any value. And which, if a person is dispossessed of, there cannot be a greater sorrow for having lost something. The quest and search for this guidance is engrained in man's nature, and desire for it is firmly embedded in his heart and soul.

However, this guidance cannot be established in open space. It can only be understood and practised upon when living and practical examples are before our eyes. They are the ones whom we remember as Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous in the history of humanity.

فَأُولٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ أَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيِّيْنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِيْنَ

"they are with those whom Allâh favoured: they are the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous." (Sûrah an-Nisâ, verse 69)

The Qur'ân and all other heavenly Books have invited mankind to follow and emulate them, to love and obey them, to join their ranks and to attribute oneself to them.

أُولٰئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ

"These are the people whom Allâh had guided. So you also tread their path." (Sûrah al-An'âm, verse 90)

Together with this, the Qur'ân has asked us to absolve ourselves and sever our relations from those who have shifted away from the path of guidance and gone onto the road of ingratitude, worship of desires, destruction and suicide. They are the ones who transgressed the limits of rebellion, who became eligible for the wrath of Allâh ﷻ, who committed the crimes of causing distortions, changes and alterations in the religion, and who became the targets of clear deviation:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ. صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لا غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ.

"Show us the straight path. The path of those whom You have favoured. Upon whom neither Your anger befell nor were they gone astray."

A clear miracle of the Qur'ân

At this point, a clear miracle of the Qur'ân is seen. If an impartial student of history and religions brings faith on just this one sentence: that an unlettered Messenger (ﷺ) who was born in the desert and lived his entire life in the desert, has conveyed such an intricate historical fact through his tongue in the sense that the followers of Christianity have been given the title of ضـــالين – those who are gone astray. This is such a historical fact that the history of literature itself has submitted to it and the entire historical treasure has cast its head down and accepted it. Furthermore, historians themselves are left stupefied.

I am turning your attention to this literary experience that words that have been conveyed to other languages have sometimes lost their strength and there has been differences in conveying their exact meaning. Words also undertake a historical journey. Just as there are journeys of human caravans, and the historical journeys of cultures and thoughts - when they undertake their journeys, they lose much of their originality and they accept many external and local influences.

Even in the Urdu language, there are many Arabic words which have become difficult to understand in their correct context and meaning. That strength and power that was in the original language no longer remains.

The word ضـــلالة is also from among these words. This word is applied to every type of corruption in belief, every level of corruption in deeds, the slightest deviation, and every type of misunderstanding – be it major or minor. A study of languages shows that just as things have a temperature, words also have a temperature. Just as bodies have a size, words also have a size.

The amazing thing is that the personality [Muhammad ﷺ] who had never studied the history of Christianity, who never had the means of such information, who travelled to a Christian land for just a few days, whose meeting with a Christian person has been established for just a few minutes – Allâh ﷻ has conveyed this fact through his tongue: that he has used the words المغضـــوب عليهم for the Jews and the words ولا الضالين for the Christians.

This word alone is sufficient as a proof that the Qur'ân has been revealed by Allâh ﷻ and that it is divine revelation. Ten words could be used for the Christians. In an extensive language like Arabic, there could have been 50 words and all would have been applicable. However, a clear distinction has been made – and the words المغضـــوب عليهم have been used for the Jews.

The history of the Jews shows that they were eligible for "the wrath of Allâh". The negative and divisional influences that they have had on human morals and inclinations, on human character and practices, on human society; the destructive conspiracies that they have engaged in for centuries in human history; the relationship that they have had with Allâh ﷻ; the rebellion and insurgence that spread amongst them in every era; and the manner in which they denied themselves the blessings

and assistance of Allâh ﷻ - there is no better and more appropriate word for them except المغضوب عليهم.

This is also a miracle of the Qur'ân that it has used the word الضـــالين for the Christians. What is the meaning of الضـــالين? You intend travelling to Calcutta but you board the train that is going to Delhi. This is the meaning of changing the path and then remaining on that [incorrect] path. The result of this is that the more the person travels, the further away he goes from his intended destination.

Christianity travelled very swiftly. Now it is also travelling on aeroplanes (the aeroplane is also the religion of its followers). So this Christianity is not only on the surface of this earth. It has travelled the speed of aeroplanes in its religious journey. In other words, not only has it walked far away from its intended destination, rather it has flown far away from its intended destination. Present day Christianity is something completely different – which ought to be referred to as the gift and religion of St. Paul.

The message of Ramadân

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ

"O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you. Perchance you may become pious." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 183)

This is the verse of the Qur'ân in which the announcement was made that fasting in the month of Ramadân is incumbent. All the Muslims - of that time and all future Muslims till the day of resurrection - came to know the incumbency of fasting through this verse. This verse contains certain things that ought to be pondered over, contemplated over. I will first give the meaning of it and then draw your attention to a specific matter.

First îmân is mentioned

Allâh ﷻ says: "O you people who have brought îmân!" There is much eloquence and wisdom in this type of address. Something that is very difficult and heavy on the soul and which needs much resolve - the basis of it has been made îmân. It is for this reason that îmân is mentioned first. O you who already have îmân, who have promised to accept all of Allâh's orders, who have entered the fold of Islam, who have handed yourselves over to Allâh ﷻ in the sense that He is your master, your judge - whatever order He issues you will act on it irrespective of whether you enjoy it or not, whether it will benefit you in this world or not, whether it is easy or difficult, whether it is one order or ten orders, whether you have to carry it out once or a hundred times, you have accepted submission before Allâh ﷻ, placed the necklace of His worship around your necks, announced that you are slaves of His orders and that you will carry out whatever He orders. It is therefore only the being of Allâh ﷻ that can commence this order in this particular manner. The laws of this world, the announcements

of the governments, the new legislation that is promulgated, the new restrictions that are imposed - in all of these there is no need to say that if you follow them you will save yourself or if you do not act upon them you will be punished. [The orders are merely issued]. However, Allâh ﷻ who is the absolute ruler, the creator of the heavens and earth, and in whose control is the life and honour of everyone could have issued this order in any way He willed and He would have full right in doing so. However, he addressed us thus: "O you people who have brought îmân."

Allâh ﷻ addressed the power of îmân of us all Muslims. He awakened the power of îmân and made it the basis. O people who have already made a promise that you will certainly obey [Me] and that you are the slaves of [My] orders! "Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you."

Consideration is given to the human temperament

Allâh ﷻ is the maker and creator of the human temperament. He is also the one who takes the human temperament into consideration - not because He is compelled to do so but out of His wisdom and mercy. When He orders something, He also paves the way for it so that man could accept it easily. It is the nature and temperament of man that when something seems new and unfamiliar to him, he is vexed and startled by it. [For example, he will say:] "What! Do I have to do this as well?" However, once man learns that this particular order was carried out before and people have been doing it over the generations, he lends an ear to this order, he accepts it happily, and easily obeys it.

"O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you." It is established from the history of religions, ethics, peoples and nations that fasting in some form or another was prescribed in every religion. Details in this

regard are to be found in the books of religion and history. What the nature of this fasting was, how many days was it for, what was the timing of it, from when it used to commence and what restrictions were imposed in this fast - all this is an intellectual and historical matter - there is no possibility of going into details over here.

The correct meaning of taqwâ

Allâh ﷻ says: "Perchance you may become pious." I would like to draw your attention to a particular matter. When a particular word of a particular language is used in another language, then in most cases the word loses its original meaning and various ideas are formulated in the mind regarding that word. One such word is *taqwâ* and *muttaqî*. In our environment and circles the word *muttaqî* means: one who engages in a lot of worship, who sleeps very little at night, if he does not sleep at all then he is a bigger *muttaqî*, who does not eat, if he engages in continuous worship then he is a bigger *muttaqî*, he offers salâh in abundance, who is totally devoted in his salâh, when you see him offering salâh he seems to be a bigger *muttaqî*, and who abstains from things on the slightest of doubts. This is our concept of a *muttaqî*.

However, in the language from which this word came, i.e. in the Arabic language, the word *taqwâ* does not have the meaning of one who engages in abundant worship, one who remains awake at night, one who fasts by day and spends the night in worship and one who offers abundant salâh. In Arabic, the word *taqwâ* refers to a special attribute. *Taqwâ* does not mean worship, it means fear. *Taqwâ* does not mean reciting the Qur'ân or reading the *tasbîh*. *Taqwâ* is a special attribute. Taqwa is a temperament. *Taqwâ* is a capability. *Taqwâ* is a nature. The month of Ramadân comes in order to make us *muttaqî* persons. "Perchance you may become pious." This seems a small word to look at and also a small word to

pronounce. Small words of the Qur'ân are also miracles. This verse does not mean that when Ramaḍân comes you have *taqwâ* and when it ends there is no *taqwâ*. This is not the meaning of *taqwâ*.

Taqwâ means to have the habit of modesty and shame - to develop the habit of regard and consideration. Take the example of a child. If he has been educated correctly, if he has received a good environment and if he has been correctly trained then he begins to respect his elders. What does respect to elders mean? It means that he will not do anything in the presence of his elders that would constitute disrespect to them, defamation of them, mockery of them or humiliation of them. In such a case we will say that the child has regard and consideration for elders, he has learnt manners. In like manner should be the regard and consideration of a student [to his teacher], a *murîd* [to his shaykh] and a worker [to his boss]. *Taqwâ* thus means to have regard and take into consideration before doing anything we must ask ourselves how is this act? Is it going to make the person happy or unhappy? If the act is in the parameter of religion, then is it in accordance with the Sharî'ah or not? We must develop the habit of asking ourselves these questions. This is the meaning of *taqwâ*.

Let me give you a proof for this. 'Umar ﷺ is known as *al-fârûq al-a'ẓam* and *amîrul mu'minîn*. Among the Saḥâbah he holds the highest position after Abu Bakr ﷺ. He was the khalîfah of the Muslims. He was the *amîrul mu'minîn*. The Qur'ân was revealed in his presence. He was an Arab [who thoroughly understood Arabic]. In whose time the idiomatic language which is considered the benchmark for every era and which is like the acceptable currency of the time - he inherited this language and he spoke this language. The Saḥâbah were such that they were never ashamed of asking anything. They were always concerned about verifying and increasing their knowledge. So 'Umar ﷺ addressed 'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ûd ﷺ

and said: "Tell me, what is *taqwâ*?" He replied: "O Amîrul mu'minîn! Have you ever tread a path which is covered by very thorny trees on either side? And the path is very narrow? 'Umar ﷺ replied: "Yes. I happened to tread such a path." Ibn Mas'ûd ﷺ asked him: "How did you walk?" He replied: "I gathered by clothes close to my body and ensured that my sleeves and other loose clothes do not get caught by the thorns." Ibn Mas'ûd ﷺ replied: "This is the meaning of *taqwâ*. This is how you should live your life - that you do not do anything that would earn the displeasure of Allâh ﷻ, that is against the ruling and that is prohibited."

Many people do not ponder over this verse due to their ignorance of Arabic modes of expression. They feel that fasting is made incumbent in order to become *muttaqî* in the sense that the person who keeps the 29 or 30 fasts of Ramaḍân, Ramaḍân comes to an end, the moment he sees the moon of *eid* he becomes a *muttaqî*. That the person who kept fast during the day and ate nothing throughout the day, who made several *khatams* (completions) of the Qur'ân, who listened to the *tarâwîḥ* and engaged in some worship by night - such a person is a *muttaqî*? This does not mean that the person has passed his test and that he is free now. What it means is that in the month of Ramaḍân he has left lawful, pure and wholesome foods during the day because it was the order of Allâh ﷻ and because it entailed His pleasure. He did not do this for one or two days. Rather, he did this for 29 or 30 days. He did not drink water despite it being a great bounty of Allâh ﷻ. Allâh ﷻ says: "It is from water that We created every living thing." Moreover, he did not eat food although Allâh ﷻ provided it to him. All the foods from his lawful earnings were present at home, yet he did not eat them. Why did he not eat them? Why did he not drink water?

There are also those things which man does on the basis of being a human - this includes his conjugal relations, his

dealings, his actions. We leave all these things solely because it is the order of Allâh ﷻ. He prohibited us from having even lawful things from dawn till sunset - that a single drop of water should not go down our throat, not a single morsel of food should go down our throat.

Since we have abstained from these pure and wholesome things by the order of Allâh ﷻ, it should be clear to us that when Ramaḍân comes to an end, we should abstain from filthy and impure things. What is the meaning of filthy and impure? We think that it refers to something that causes us to become dirty or if some foul-smelling thing falls on us we become impure. In actual fact, the most impure and filthy thing is sin - it is the disobedience of Allâh ﷻ.

Just as we have abstained from the lawful and wholesome things in the days of Ramaḍân because Allâh ﷻ has ordered us to do so, how can we commit sins out of Ramaḍân? How can we do things that would earn the displeasure of Allâh ﷻ? How can we speak lies? How can we give false testimony? How can we vex and torment a fellow Muslim? How can we forfeit someone's right? How can we slander? How can we steal? How can we oppress? How can we shed someone's blood? How can we break someone's heart? All these sins that you are aware of - you have to develop the habit of abstaining from them and give due consideration and regard to them - this is called *taqwâ*.

Taqwâ is to do with the temperament, it does not refer to worship. *Ibâdat* (worship) is one thing and *taqwâ* is something else. *Taqwâ* refers to a temperament or a state of mind. A person may engage in worship but in his transactions, while in a state of anger, in worldly situations his worship is left abandoned. This is not *taqwâ*. *Taqwâ* means that his mind must be developed. Fasting is prescribed so that this attribute of *taqwâ* comes into you. Allâh said: "*la'allakum tattaqûn*". He

did not say: "*la'allakum ta'budûn*" - so that you may worship Him. He did not say: "*la'allakum tashkurûn*" - so that you may be grateful to Him. He did not say: "*la'allakum tahtajjûn*" - so that you may perform ḥajj. Rather, He said: "*la'allakum tattaqûn*", i.e. engaging in this worship is not because of some personal motives or considerations. Rather it should be to develop shame in you - that this shame must become your state of mind and your nature.

Taqwâ thus means to have the habit of modesty and shame - to develop the habit of regard and consideration. That before doing something, you should think, how is it to do this? Is it going to please Allâh ﷻ or displease Him. If looked at in the religious sense, is it according to the Sharî'ah or not? Is it permissible or prohibited? Is it in accordance with the command of Allâh ﷻ and His Rasûl ﷺ or not? We have to develop this habit. This is *taqwâ* and this is what is meant by *la'allakum tattaqûn*.

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Taqwâ thus means to have the habit of modesty and shame - to develop the habit of regard and consideration. That before doing something, you should think, how is it to do this? Is it going to please Allâh ﷻ or displease Him. If looked at in the religious sense, is it according to the Sharî'ah or not? Is it permissible or prohibited? Is it in accordance with the command of Allâh ﷻ and His Rasûl ﷺ or not? We have to develop this habit. This is *taqwâ* and this is what is meant by *la'allakum tattaqûn*.

The message of eid

Allâh ﷻ says in the Qur'ân:

يُرِيْدُ اللهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلاَ يُرِيْدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ز وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ. وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِيْ عَنِّيْ فَإِنِّيْ قَرِيْبٌ ط أُجِيْبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ لا فَلْيَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِيْ وَلْيُؤْمِنُوْا بِيْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُوْنَ.

"Allâh desires for you ease and does not desire for you hardship, and that you may complete the number, and so that you magnify Allâh for His having guided you, and so that you may be thankful. When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am near. I accept the supplication of the supplicant when he supplicates to Me. They should therefore obey My command and have conviction in Me so that they may come onto the virtuous path." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verses 185-186)

These verses of Sûrah al-Baqarah are connected with the blessed month of Ramadân. These verses commence with the words:

يٰأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ.

"O believers! Ordained for you is fasting as it was ordained for those before you, so that you may become pious." (verse 183)

Together with this, the following words are also mentioned:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِيْ أُنْزِلَ فِيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدٰى وَالْفُرْقَانِ.

"It is the month of Ramadân in which the Qur'ân was revealed. It is a guidance for the people and clear proofs to find the way and to differentiate truth from falsehood." (verse 185)

Allâh ﷻ says that He desires ease for you. His will and desire is ease and comfort for you. He does not will to put you into difficulty. These 29 or 30 days of fasting are not any mountains. Rather, they move continuously and come to an end quickly. Thereafter, Allâh ﷻ says: "and so that you magnify Allâh for His having guided you". In other words, you should magnify Allâh ﷻ over the fact that He has guided you and He

has given you this bounty. And also "so that you may be thankful".

This verse also makes mention of eid

Allâh ﷻ also makes mention of eid in this verse. Although eid is not specifically named, the rationale, the purpose, the obligations and the deeds that have to be done on this day have all been mentioned. When Allâh ﷻ blesses you with the ability to fast in the month of Ramadân – that Ramadân comes with blessings, comes with the divine inspiration of Allâh ﷻ, that you spend the days fasting and the nights in His worship – then you should magnify Allâh ﷻ over the fact that He guided you, conferred you with the wealth of îmân and Islam, and then gave you the divine inspiration to do all these acts of virtue. If He did not give you any of this, where would you have Ramadân and where would you have fasted?

There are hundreds and thousands of nations in this world. They know that the month of Ramadân comes to the Muslims just as they also have different months. However, they do not know when this month comes and when it ends. They also do not know what the difference is between their months and between the month of Ramadân.

So the first thing is that Allâh ﷻ guided us. He blessed us with the wealth of Islam. He blessed us with good health whereby we could fast. The greatest thing after all this is that He gave us *taufîq* – divine inspiration. Everything is confined to this *taufîq*. If a person has everything but does not have *taufîq*, then he has nothing. What are the different things which a person needs in order to keep fast? He needs life. By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, He has blessed him with life. He needs youthful strength and he needs to be *bâligh* – the age of maturity in Islam. He has both these as well. He needs health – he has this as well. He needs to know the different rules and injunctions concerning fasting – he

has this as well. The government could have stopped him, the law could have stopped him, and a doctor could have told him that fasting was inappropriate and harmful to him – however there is none of all this. Despite all this, why is he not fasting? It is because he does not have the *taufîq*.

The meaning of taufîq

Taufîq is something that cannot be translated into any language. It means that Allâh ﷻ wills mercy for someone and that Allâh ﷻ instils this thought and this desire in his heart that he should do such and such deed. That Allâh ﷻ removes all obstacles and barriers and then decides that this deed should be done, that this person should fast, that he should offer his ṣalâh. All this together is known as *taufîq*. This lengthy explanation which I have given is conveyed by a single word in Arabic, as mentioned in the Qur'ân, viz. *taufîq*.

You will see around you, you will see in the area where you live – that the environment is conducive, all the means are available, all the conditions have been met with, the surroundings are favourable – yet the person is not fasting. This is because he does not have the *taufîq*. If Allâh ﷻ has given you and provided you with everything, and also bestowed you with *taufîq*, you should magnify and glorify Him: "so that you magnify Allâh for His having guided you."

Based on this, it is Sunnah that when it is Eid al-Fiṭr, a person should say the *takbîr* in a soft tone while going for the Eid ṣalâh. When it is Eid al-Aḍhâ, he should say the *takbîr* in a loud tone. The *takbîr* is:

اَللهُ أَكْبَرُ اَللهُ أَكْبَرُ لاَ إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ وَاللهُ أَكْبَرُ اَللهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلِلهِ الْحَمْدُ

He who has learnt his lesson does not get a break

It is also Sunnah to take one path when going for the Eid ṣalâh and a different path when returning. The reason for this is that the entire atmosphere may be engulfed with this *takbîr*, that it may fall into the ears of those residing there, and that ground may bear testimony [to hearing this *takbîr*]. As long as the person remains waiting for the Eid ṣalâh, he should recite this *takbîr*. "so that you magnify Allâh for His having guided you and so that you may be thankful" over the fact that Allâh ﷻ gave you the *taufîq*, Allâh ﷻ enabled you to fast, if you missed any fast due to illness or some other valid reason, you made a good intention [of fulfilling it later on].

All the joyous festivals in this world are occasions of joy and happiness. In other words, the responsibilities and normal everyday jobs are excused and overlooked. However, Islam is the only religion wherein responsibilities have been increased on a joyous day. This responsibility is not so heavy whereby man can claim that he is unable to do it. Rather, it is a very blessed responsibility, it is a responsibility which would increase the rank of the person, it is a sensible responsibility, it is a responsibility of humanity and nobility. These two *rak'ats* [of Eid ṣalâh] which you offer are not offered daily. A person may offer the *ishrâq* and *châsht* ṣalâhs of his own accord – these are neither *farḍ* nor *wâjib*. However, the Eid ṣalâh has been added [and made *wâjib*].

If you were to look at other celebrations and festivals, acts of worship are excused and exempted. It is of no importance whether someone prays or not, whether he goes to church or not - because it is Christmas day – it is a holiday. On the other hand, Islam has increased our responsibility. Between the *fajr ṣalâh* and the *ẓuhr ṣalâh*, one additional ṣalâh has been added. This is the Islamic way of giving thanks and showing gratitude. The way of giving thanks is **not** to have a holiday. The famous saying applies here:

اس کو جھجي نه ملي جس کو سبق یاد ھوا

"The person who has learnt his lesson does not get a break."

Alhamdulillâh, this *ummah* has learnt its lesson. All other nations have forgotten their lessons. The fact of the matter is that there is not a single nation that has learnt its lesson. It is only this *ummah* that has learnt its lesson – irrespective of how shakily and unsteadily it may have learnt it. Since it has learnt its lesson, it did not get a holiday. A child who learns his lesson, a scholar who learns his lesson does not get a holiday. Rather, he has responsibilities. He has to express his gratitude and thanks over this bounty. In so doing, this bounty will be increased – it will not be decreased.

So now you have to offer these two *rak'ats* of salâh and also pay the *sadaqatul fitr*. This is not done all the time [but just on this day]. This is not found in the festivals of other religions. They merely eat, drink and enjoy themselves. It is a one-sided affair. While in Islam, instead of receiving, you have to give more. Give the *fitrah* to the poor and needy. Offer two *rak'ats* of salâh as a thanks to Allâh ﷻ. Then say the *takbîr* and express your gratitude to Allâh ﷻ - "so that you magnify Allâh for His having guided you and so that you may be thankful".

The final Prophet and the perfect religion

اَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلاَمَ دِيْنًا.

"Today I have perfected for you your religion, and completed upon you My favour, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 3)

After studying the Qur'ân, it is gauged that two things with regard to religion are very important. Allâh ﷻ has sent promises with regard to these two things and religions and faiths have a fundamental need for these two things. One of them is the propagation of religion, and the other is the safeguarding of religion.

The propagation of religion

As far as Islam is concerned, explicit references are made to both these things. For example, the Qur'ân explicitly says the following with regard to the propagation of religion:

هُوَ الَّذِيْ أَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهُ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهِ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ.

"It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion in order to give it supremacy over every religion even though the polytheists abhor it." (Sûrah at-Taubah, verse 33)

In the previous verse, Allâh ﷻ says:

وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ

"even though the unbelievers abhor it."

From the words لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهِ - in order to give it supremacy over every religion – it becomes clear that this religion of Islam will reign supreme over all other religions. This supremacy will not be only on a political, organizational and authoritative manner. Rather, it will reign supreme with regard to its proofs and evidences, and also its logical and intellectual subjugation.

Secondly, the following prediction and glad tiding was given to Rasûlullâh ﷺ:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللهِ وَالْفَتْحُ. وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِيْ دِيْنِ اللهِ أَفْوَاجًا. فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا.

"When the help of Allâh comes, and victory. And you see people entering the religion of Allâh in multitudes. Glorify the praises of your Sustainer and seek forgiveness from Him. Surely He is forgiving." (Sûrah an-Nasr)

The gratifying scene of "people entering the religion of Allâh in multitudes" was shown to Rasûlullâh ﷺ during his very life. In fact, this scene was shown time and again in history.

Thirdly, the following was said in Sûrah an-Nûr:

وَعَدَ اللهُ الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ. وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا.

"Allâh has promised those who have îmân from among you and who did good deeds that He shall make them leaders in the land as He had made leaders those who were before them. He shall fortify for them their religion which He chose for them and He will change their fear for security." (Sûrah an-Nûr, verse 55)

The words تمكين في الأرض – establishing and giving authority to the Muslims in the land – also entail the spread and propagation of Islam. Allâh ﷻ therefore says:

الَّذِيْنَ إِنْ مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

"Those whom, when We give them power in the land, they establish the ṣalâh, they give the zakâh, they command the good and they prohibit the evil." (Sûrah al-Ḥajj, verse 41)

These words are very comprehensive, very wide, very meaningful and very thought-provoking. History attests to their authenticity word for word.

The safeguarding of religion

As for the safeguarding and protection of religion, which is the second fundamental, and which is a very important fundamental – the Qur'ân has guaranteed this. It has made a grand and stimulating announcement for this. History has been made a witness to this announcement. This is the order of Allâh ﷻ and the announcement of the Qur'ân:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ

"It is We Ourselves who revealed this admonition, and We are its protectors." (Sûrah al-Ḥijr, verse 9)

Allâh ﷻ explicitly says that it is He who sent down "the admonition", i.e. the Qur'ân and that He alone is its protector. In other words, Allâh ﷻ has taken the direct responsibility of safeguarding and protecting it.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

In every era the need remained for there to be a complete society, a nation and an Islamic life on the level of a universal call.

This is also the need of the world today.

- ❖ The entire society of a country should be at the forefront of an Islamic life.
- ❖ What is the nature of Islamic morals?
- ❖ How can a Muslim have conviction that الصدق ينجي والكذب يهلك – that honesty makes one successful while dishonesty destroys one?
- ❖ This fact must be firmly embedded in the depths of his heart that good character gives him salvation and makes him successful. That dishonesty and a corrupt way of life destroys him.
- ❖ He should have conviction that العاقبة للمتقين – a good destiny is for the righteous.
- ❖ He should have conviction that قد أفلح من زكاها وقد خاب من دساها – he who purified his soul has indeed achieved his goal and he who leaves it buried in the dust has indeed failed.
- ❖ He should have conviction that وإن الدار الآخرة لهي الحيوان - the abode of the hereafter, that is the true life.
- ❖ He should have conviction that help comes from Allâh ﷻ alone.

- ❖ Good deeds have a good effect. Evil deeds cause failure. By choosing a good life, a person experiences success.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwi *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

Islamic society

وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الإِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُوْنَ. فَضْلاً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَّاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ.

"However, Allâh placed the love of Imân in your hearts and beautified it in your hearts, and placed the repugnance of unbelief, sinning and disobedience in your hearts. It is such who are on the path of virtue. [This is] by the grace of Allâh and His kindness. Allâh is all-knowing, wise." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verses 7-8)

The Qur'ân offers the correct criterion for an Islamic society by saying that the love of righteous ways and mannerisms must be firmly embedded in man's heart and soul. His temperament must be made up in this regard. He must have a natural and rational abhorrence and refusal for sinning, wrongdoing and worshipping of his desires. Any call which entails rebellion, desires and greed, the trampling of human rights, a call which leaves human nature obliterated, which is able to sacrifice the greatest public and social benefits in order to amuse one's nature or to satisfy one's desires and inclinations – this society should reject and refute such a call or movement. It should abhor it to its core. It should be treated in such a manner that it could be referred to with words portraying annoyance and loathsomeness.

The Qur'ân gives testimony with regard to this Islamic society (which is built on the foundation of the company of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, his training and the teachings of the Qur'ân). The Qur'ân says:

وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الإِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُوْنَ. فَضْلاً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَّاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ.

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of virtue. [This is] by the grace of Allâh and His kindness. Allâh is all-knowing, wise." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verses 7-8)

Those who are conversant with Arabic can gauge the strength and temperature of these words (words also have a temperature which is understood by linguists alone). On seeing îmân and its exposition, you experience that happiness, pleasure and delight which is experienced at seeing the most beautiful of sceneries and the most attractive of things. The theme of the words وزينه في قلوبكم – and beautified it in your hearts – is beyond the limit of belief, intellect and perception. It is a natural and psychological phenomenon. That relationship is established between society and those virtuous values, morals and beneficial calls which neither requires any practical proof nor any in-depth pondering and reflection. The heart is automatically drawn towards it.

The above words were sufficient. However, the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân and the deep and intrinsic knowledge of human nature which is known to Allâh ﷻ alone is such, that the opposite attributes are also mentioned. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ

"and placed the repugnance of unbelief, sinning and disobedience in your hearts."

Allâh ﷻ made unbelief, immorality, disobedience and defiance abhorrent, repulsive and unbearable to you. The Islamic society that can be worthy of emulation by the world, whose foundations are firm and strong, which can combat the hot and cold winds of time, which can successfully pass through all types of trials and tribulations – love for righteousness is fully embedded in such a society. This love for righteousness is flowing through its very veins. Allâh ﷻ says in praise of such a society:

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَأَنْزَلَ اللهُ سَكِيْنَتَهُ عَلى رَسُوْلِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوى وَكَانُوْا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا. وَكَانَ اللهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا.

"When the unbelievers harboured an obstinate disdain in their hearts – the obstinate disdain of ignorance – then Allâh sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers, and kept them steadfast on the spirit of reverence. And they were most worthy and deserving of it. And Allâh is aware of everything." (Sûrah al-Fath, verse 26)

Ponder over these words:

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

The unbelievers harboured the obstinate disdain of ignorance in their hearts. Nation-worship, lineage-worship, profit-worship, self-worship – these are all included in "the obstinate disdain of ignorance". Language fanaticism is also included in this. You have seen what a strong motivation and factor this language fanaticism is. In the recent past, this language fanaticism sowed dissension and caused rivers of blood to flow. In so doing, humanity and moral values were totally overlooked. In so doing, man hunted man. In so doing, man shed the blood of man. It is difficult to find examples of this nature in history. All this was a result of "the obstinate disdain of ignorance".

Allâh ﷻ says:

وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوى

This could have been expressed in several ways. Allâh ﷻ could have said that He caused the righteous word to flow from their tongues. But no, He said, "He kept them steadfast on the spirit of reverence". This became their salient feature. Not only did it become their salient feature, it became part and parcel of their temperament. Temperament is something that is beyond habits, the effects of training and companionship, and intellectual and

educational endeavours. Temperament is something that supersedes everything else.

Very few of us may have pondered and reflected as to why the word ألزمهم is used. In other words, this spirit became their salient feature and their temperament. No one can remove them from the boundaries of "the spirit of reverence". By adding the words وكانوا أحق بها وأهلها – "And they were most worthy and deserving of it" – Allâh ﷻ puts a further stamp on this. They went further and voluntarily accepted "the spirit of reverence". This "spirit of reverence" became imbibed within them. The Qur'ân then explains a very intricate criterion. I think that in the entire history of human morals and psychology, the peculiarity of this society that is explained in the Qur'ân is such that even human imagination cannot go beyond it. Allâh ﷻ says:

لَوْلاَ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَّقَالُوْا هذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ

"Why, then, did the believing men and women not think good of their own people when they heard it and say: 'This is a clear slander.'?" (Sûrah an-Nûr, verse 12)

When a believing person and a pure soul was slandered, why did you not use yourself as a yardstick? Why did you not look at yourself in the mirror? Upon hearing this slander, why did you not immediately say: "This is impossible because if we cannot commit such an act then that person also cannot commit such an act."

Allâh ﷻ made Islamic society in such a way that each person is a mirror of the other. Every individual is a testifier and witness for the other. He is not only a witness but a person who comes to the defence of the other. He can openly and categorically state that this cannot be the case. Each person was moulded in such a way in the society of Rasûlullâh ﷺ that each one was a mirror of the other. A poet says:

"The gardener had prepared such a garden that there was no small and big plant in it [all of them were the same size]."

This is the type of Islamic society on which one can have full confidence and reliance. This is the type of society on which the responsibility and leadership of the entire world can be placed. It can be fully relied upon for the guidance and leadership of the human race.

Human society, in fact human life, comprises of man and woman

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ

"Then their Sustainer accepted their prayer [saying]: 'I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you, be he man or woman. You are mutually one." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 195)

I have recited a portion of a verse from Sûrah Âl 'Imrân. Allâh ﷻ first mentioned the supplications of the believers. The believers had made heart-rending supplications to Allâh ﷻ. They were not ordinary supplications. They were very convincing, insightful and manly supplications. I have used the word "manly" intentionally.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلإِيْمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا

"O our Sustainer! We have heard a caller calling towards belief [saying]: 'Believe in your Sustainer', so we have believed." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 193)

The above supplication is a manly supplication.

رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّآتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الأَبْرَارِ رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا وَعَدتَّنَا عَلى رُسُلِكَ وَلاَ تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيمَةِ ط إِنَّكَ لاَ تُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ

"O our Sustainer! Now forgive us our sins and remove from us our evils and give us death with the pious people O our Sustainer! Give us that which You promised us through Your Messengers and do not disgrace us on the day of resurrection. Surely You do not go back on Your promise." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verses 193-194)

These are supplications of great courage. They had said one additional thing:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلإِيْمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا

"O our Sustainer! We have heard a caller calling towards belief [saying]: 'Believe in your Sustainer, so we have believed."

وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّاتِنَا

"Forgive us our sins and overlook our sins."

It is obvious that in these supplications our minds will go towards males only. The caller is male, the accepter of the call [Allâh ﷻ] is referred to as a male. If I were to say that those who remained in the forefront and those who responded to this call in a manly way were also males, then this will also be correct. However, when Allâh ﷻ speaks about reward and the acceptance of supplications, He specifically mentions females despite their not being in that context. Allâh ﷻ makes mention of the other sex, the "weaker" sex.

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ

"Then their Sustainer accepted their prayer [saying]: 'I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you, be he man or woman. You are mutually one."

There is absolute equality in the mercy of Allâh ﷻ

At this point if there was some litterateur, some writer, some legislator, some expert psychologist or someone who defends the freedom of women; I am fully convinced that he would not have mentioned women in this context. What was the occasion? What was being mentioned? All the supplications were those of men. Men alone were in the forefront of all these acts. But look at the mercy of Allâh ﷻ - He is the creator of both the sexes, males and females. His gaze of kindness falls equally on both of them. He is the Sustainer of all the worlds. He says:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ

"Then their Sustainer accepted their prayer [saying]: 'I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you."

The word عـامل (labourer) is masculine. Till this point, males were mentioned. لا أضـيع عمل عامل منكم Allâh says: "I do not waste

the labour of any labourer among you, the endeavour of anyone who is making an endeavour, the effort of anyone who is making an effort, the sacrifice of anyone who is making a sacrifice." Then all of a sudden, Allâh ﷻ says: مـن ذكـر أو أنثى (be he man or woman). Allâh ﷻ remembers women and bestows this honour upon them – whether the labourer is male or female, whether that person supplicating to Him is male or female. As regards the mercy of Allâh ﷻ (I am not saying that this is applicable in other things, but I can say with absolute conviction) that with regard to the mercy of Allâh ﷻ and the kindness of Allâh ﷻ, there is absolute equality between male and female. There is no difference and no distinction whatsoever in this regard. The proof of this is the present verse:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ

Then their Sustainer accepted their prayer.

If you look at the entire context and framework of these verses, your eyes will open, you will see the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân and you will admit to the equality of Allâh's ﷻ mercy. If anyone were to jump up, if anyone is overtaken by ecstasy – and I say this specifically to my beloved sisters – that if they are overtaken by ecstasy, that if they fall unconscious out of gratitude, if eulogies of gratitude emanate and spring forth from every hair of their body – then this will be totally acceptable and most appropriate.

This was not the context for them to be mentioned. Even the males (may Allâh ﷻ forgive them) did not mention their sisters in their supplications. They did not even mention their own mothers in their supplications, despite the lofty position of their mothers. All the supplications were for themselves. All the masculine genders were used in their supplications. But look at the universal lordship of that Lord of the worlds and look at His universal mercy, He says:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّيْ لاَ أُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى

"Then their Sustainer accepted their prayer [saying]: 'I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you, be he man or woman.'"

He then puts His final stamp: بعضكم من بعض – you are mutually one. Why did you forget? It is as though those males who were supplicating were cautioned – why did you forget such a major portion of your body? Why did you forget such an important element of human life? Well, you may have forgotten, but We did not forget. You may forget a hundred and a thousand times but We will never forget.

لاَ يَضِلُّ رَبِّيْ وَلاَ يَنْسى

"My Sustainer neither errs nor does He forget." (Sûrah Tâ Hâ, verse 52)

This was the reply given by Mûsâ ﷺ. And so, Allâh ﷻ gave the reply:

أَنِّيْ لاَ أُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ

"I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you."

Then without the context requiring it, Allâh ﷻ says:

مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى

Whether the labourer is a male or a female. This is extremely surprising. You are such that you cannot do without the other. Not only is human society but human life is made up of these two elements. These two elements can never be separated.

The meaning of "laying to waste"

When my mind went towards this verse, then an entire universe of meanings and themes came before me. Look at the extensiveness and comprehensiveness of the words لا أضيع (I do not lay to waste). Allâh ﷻ says:

أَنِّيْ لاَ أُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ

"I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you."

The Arabic word إضاعة is used. In other words, the result of his labour will manifest itself in this world and in the hereafter as well. This verse encompasses this world and the hereafter. The verse does not say that if women engage in any act of worship they will not see the fruits thereof in this world. That they strive to acquire knowledge and they will not acquire this knowledge. That they strive in the field of reformation and they do not achieve any results. That they endeavour to make this life enjoyable, meaningful and attractive and they do not are not successful in this regard. And that the entire reward for all this is reserved for the hereafter. [This is not the case]. Rather, irrespective of which field you two [male and female] endeavour, you shall certainly see the results of these efforts and endeavours. What can I say about acts of worship? If you were to look at Islamic history alone – in reality this history alone is totally preserved – you will see that our helplessness, the helplessness of humanity, the helplessness of human knowledge and the helplessness of human fate – you will find that all this history has been preserved by the followers of Muḥammad ﷺ. It is a history of intellectual progress, spiritual progress and the deriving of injunctions. You can see that there was the full possibility that in the field of *wilâyah* (proximity to Allâh ﷻ), males alone could have been in the forefront. This is because the field of *wilâyah* and the field of acceptance before Allâh ﷻ requires many attributes. And this has some affinity with males. To exert one's efforts, to wage jihâd, to spend the entire night in ṣalâh, to keep fast – these are all acts that are very easy for men.

I do not wish to go into details. I merely wish to derive pleasure from this miraculous nature of the Qur'ân and to demonstrate that Allâh ﷻ says:

أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم

"I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you."

You will see that in this sentence, the word عمل is indefinite, and the word عامل is also indefinite. "I do not lay to waste the labour of any labourer from among you" - irrespective of which field you [males] endeavour in and you females endeavour in. If you [women] endeavour in the field of worship, I can convey you to the level of Râbi'ah Baṣrîyyah *raḥmatullâhi 'alayhâ* and even beyond that.

The mutual bond in human society

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالاً كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"O people! Continually fear your Sustainer Who created you from one soul [Âdam ﷺ] and created from it its mate. Then out of the two He spread out many men and women [on earth]. Continually fear Allâh through Whom you ask of one another, and be mindful of [severing ties with] your relatives. Surely Allâh is watchful over you." (Sûrah an-Nisâ', verse 1)

This verse is from Sûrah an-Nisâ' (the chapter on women). The name of this sûrah itself is proof of the status that has been accorded to women and the "fair-sex".

It is my opinion that this verse sheds full light on Islam's view of women, the nature of man's and woman's mutual responsibilities and their mutual relationships. First of all, Allâh ﷻ points to the fact that both sexes were created in the same way. That the destiny of both has become so inter-related with each other that it is as though they are two parts of the same body. The reason for the minor changes in the physical appearance of man and woman is so that both may traverse this journey of life in a pleasant and agreeable manner.

First of all, the existence of both sexes is from a single soul. This single soul was then divided into two parts. Despite this division, there is no opposition and no hostility between them. Instead, they come together at the same point. Man who is travelling through this world has been provided with a travelling companion from his own kind. This companion is a part of his very body. Then from these two, human progeny spread and increased. Allâh ﷻ has placed much blessing in the companionship, love and mutual journey of both in the sense that from these two, they resulted in thousands and from these thousands into millions. They increased to such an extent that even a computer cannot correctly estimate how many humans

أَنِّيْ لاَ أُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ

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have been born. This number is known to Allâh ﷻ alone. Allâh ﷻ makes reference to this large number of humans by the word كثيرا – many.

Allâh ﷻ then says: "Continually fear Allâh through Whom you ask of one another". For the first time, the Qur'ân conveys this idea in a revolutionary style that every member of human society is dependent on the other. Every single person asks and every single person is asked of. This distribution is not such that those who ask are on one side and those who are asked are on another side. Rather, the one who asks is also the one who is asked. And the one who is asked also asks. This mutual asking and giving is a chain to which every single person is bound. Our social life is a web in which every single person is in need of the other.

A man cannot traverse his natural and normal life in a pleasant way without a woman. In the same way, a noble woman cannot spend her life in a pleasant way without a life partner. Allâh ﷻ has made each one in need of and dependent on each other in such a way that they cannot spend this life without each other.

Moreover, Allâh ﷻ says that the being in whose name you ask of each other is Allâh ﷻ Himself. An Islamic society comes into existence through belief in Allâh ﷻ, belief in His greatness, belief in His might and belief in His oneness. The companionship of one Muslim man with a Muslim woman is only permissible when the name of Allâh ﷻ is brought between the two. It is the name of Allâh ﷻ alone that brings two separate entities into one. It is His name that brings distant entities close together. It is His name that makes outsiders into your own kith and kin. It is through His name that those whose shadows too you could not tolerate have now become so close and beloved that you cannot even imagine a proper life without them. They now become the life partners of each other – each one responsible for the other.

The relationship between husband and wife is one of such love and reliance on each other that at times it even exceeds the relationship with one's parents. The informality, confidence, affection, straightforwardness and naturalness that are found between husband and wife cannot be imagined in any other relationship. All this is a result of the miracle of Allâh's ﷻ name: that once the name of Allâh ﷻ comes between the two, a new world comes into existence. Till yesterday, he or she who was a complete outsider now becomes even closer than one's own. A Muslim male and a Muslim female cannot be informal with each other, at times they cannot even travel with each other. This is because they are *ghayr mahrams* to each other. However, once the name of Allâh ﷻ comes between the two [through marriage], a sanctified relationship is established.

This is a miracle of the Qur'ân that by saying "through Whom you ask of one another", that the mutual bond of human society, its strong connection, its deep attachment and its strong link with each other has been expounded in a way that cannot be expounded by even the greatest of charters. Even the greatest book on social philosophy and sociology cannot expound it in this manner.

Allâh ﷻ then says that you should also remember that pure and great name which you bring in-between and whereby you make the forbidden lawful, the prohibited permissible and with which you bring a major revolution in your life.

The Qur'ân explains this deep and firm relationship between husband and wife in another way as well:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

"They are your garment and you are (their garment." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 187)

This is also a miracle of the Qur'ân that it uses the word "garment" for them. A garment is an important necessity for the concealment and beautification of one's self. The word

"garment" includes everything that can be said about the mutual bond and mutual reliance that exist between husband and wife. You are a garment for them and they are a garment for you. Just as a person who is devoid of garments is closer to an animal, is closer to a creature of the desert or jungle, in like manner, a human devoid of a married life is uncivilized and should be considered to be uncivilized and uncultured.

The status and position of women in Islamic society

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِيْنَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِيْنَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِيْنَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِيْنَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِيْنَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِيْنَ اللهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذَّاكِرَاتِ. أَعَدَّ اللهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّأَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا.

"Surely the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the believing men and the believing women, the truly devout men and the truly devout women, the truthful men and the truthful women, the patiently enduring men and the patiently enduring women, the humble men and the humble women, the charity-giving men and the charity-giving women, the fasting men and the fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard [their chastity], the men who remember Allâh abundantly and the women who remember [Allâh abundantly] – Allâh has set aside for them forgiveness and a great reward." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verse 35)

Allâh ﷻ loves His female servants

At the time when the Qur'ân was being recited, my mind suddenly went to a strange and extraordinary point. I experienced a special happiness and emotion. When Allâh ﷻ makes mention of great situations – we who know a little bit of Arabic would have joined them in just two sentences – but when Allâh ﷻ mentions males and females together, He mentions them ten times but yet He brings two different pronouns and mentions each attribute separately. Just look at how much Allâh ﷻ loves His female servants:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِيْنَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِيْنَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِيْنَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِيْنَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِيْنَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِيْنَ اللهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذَّاكِرَاتِ. أَعَدَّ اللهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّأَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا.

"Surely the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the believing men and the believing women, the truly devout men and the truly devout women, the truthful men and the truthful women, the

patiently enduring men and the patiently enduring women, the humble men and the humble women, the charity-giving men and the charity-giving women, the fasting men and the fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard [their chastity], the men who remember Allâh abundantly and the women who remember [Allâh abundantly] – Allâh has set aside for them forgiveness and a great reward." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verse 35)

Were it not for this matter being with Allâh ﷻ, I would have said that Allâh ﷻ was really enjoying mentioning each one separately. Ask a father who has several sons. His heart would desire that he gives the name of each one and he will enjoy mentioning the name of each one. The being of Allâh ﷻ is extremely lofty. Human traits cannot be attributed to Him. However, on the basis of human language and literature, He could have rendered this verse in another way. The word "etcetera" was not invented at that time. However, He could have said: "The Muslim males and females, the believers and the female believers, and in like manner the males and females who share all other attributes." However, He enumerated each one separately so that no one would assume that males and females can be equal as regards Islam and îmân, they could also be equal as regards devotion, but that this equality is difficult as regards truthfulness. Because women speak lies – at times in order to conceal their weakness, at times to conceal the spoiling of the food, at times to conceal the bad habits of their children, at times to conceal their weakness of oversleeping. Someone might assume that women cannot compete with men in truthfulness because this is for men – it requires bravery. What about patience? She cannot remain patient. It has always been noticed that she is the first to be injured when a calamity afflicts. She is the first one to cry out. At times, even her îmân falls into danger. At times, grief over children or grief over relatives falls onto the woman first.

Allâh ﷻ was fully aware of the human temperament. He was fully aware of the thieves of the hearts. That we will harbour bad thoughts about our sisters. "the patiently enduring men and

the patiently enduring women" – no ways, the women are in way whatsoever behind the men in the field of patience. "the humble men and the humble women". Now comes the matter of wealth. In this regard, the female cannot compete with the male. You may have heard of the name Hâtim [a man who was well known for his generosity]. But you would not hear of a Hâtimah [a female who is very generous]. What can a woman give in charity! By nature, she likes to amass wealth. She likes to save and store. Allâh ﷻ therefore says: "the charity-giving men and the charity-giving women". Now comes fasting, which is a difficult task. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَالصَّائِمِيْنَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِيْنَ اللهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذَّاكِرَاتِ.
أَعَدَّ اللهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّأَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا

"the fasting men and the fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard [their chastity], the men who remember Allâh abundantly and the women who remember [Allâh abundantly] – Allâh has set aside for them forgiveness and a great reward."

Why has such a long list of deeds been given? So that it may be known that just as Allâh ﷻ shows His kindness to His male servants, He also does the same to His female servants. His attribute of sustaining and His attribute of mercy acts simultaneously on males and females. It shades and protects them all the time.

Allâh ﷻ has brought together so many masculine plurals and so many feminine plurals that someone might assume that this is against His eloquence. How could he know that on the other hand wives, sisters and women will conclude that in every field – in human virtues, in noble characteristics, in noble deeds – they are not lagging behind the men. That they will be rewarded and honoured. They are no different from men in this regard. The purpose of their creation is no different. The peculiarities of their gender do not hinder or harm them in any way.

The Qur'ân pays particular attention to mentioning men together with women

I say to you as a student and as one who is proficient in the Arabic language that it is sufficient to merely say that the males and females can all attain to lofty positions. But when Allâh ﷻ mentions such positions, He uses a different tense for the males and a different tense for the females:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ

"Surely the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the believing men and the believing women, the truly devout men and the truly devout women."

For every word, there is a masculine gender and a feminine gender. Someone could ask the question, couldn't Allâh merely say:

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ

"Whoever did good, be it man or woman, and is a believer."

But no, Allâh ﷻ did not do this so that no one may assume that such forms of worship are reserved for males only and that females cannot attain any position in this regard. They are mentioned in fasting, they are mentioned in worship, they are mentioned in remembering Allâh ﷻ:

وَالذَّاكِرِيْنَ اللهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذَّاكِرَاتِ

"the men who remember Allâh abundantly and the women who remember [Allâh abundantly]"

Both, the masculine and the feminine genders are mentioned in the remembrance of Allâh ﷻ. This is because the history and literature of other religions show that many merits and virtues have been reserved exclusively for males. This concept was embedded in the minds. It was considered to be openly manifest that this was reserved for males only – women should not lay their hands in this regard. They cannot make any progress. They cannot accomplish anything higher than men.

However, the Qur'ân uses a separate gender for each act of worship and for each type of worship – a separate gender for males and a separate gender for females.

The Qur'ân has a chapter named after women

Now look further, what can be greater than this that one of the lengthy chapters of the Qur'ân is named after women. It is called Sûrah an-Nisâ' – the chapter on women. Can anyone who is conversant with the Hindu religion show us that in his religion and in his holy book there is any theme concerning women? However, in the Qur'ân, just as there is Sûrah al-Baqarah, Sûrah Âl 'Imrân and a host of other chapters, there is also Sûrah an-Nisâ'. It is has retained this name from the first day [of its revelation] and is continuing to do so till today. This chapter is for women. In order to progress, to acquire knowledge of Islam, to progress in Islam, to attain distinction in it, to acquire the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ, to become the accepted male and female servant of Allâh ﷻ, and to attain to lofty positions before Him – women have the full capability and possibilities of doing so. This was present from the first century of Islam and is present till today. Women can acquire all this even today.

Women are also partners in moral reformation

The Qur'ân does not confine itself to mentioning the equality of men and women in the fields of acts of obedience, acts of worship and other religious duties. Rather, based on its teachings, she shares the platform with capable male *'ulamâ'*, courageous men and distinguished individuals in the field of "commanding the good and prohibiting the evil". In other words, women also share the responsibility with men of supervising and guiding Islamic society, stopping it from treading the wrong path and ordering it to tread the straight path. Allâh ﷻ would like to see the believing males and the

believing females in the form of a united front in cooperating with each other in matters of good and righteousness. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَيُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۭ أُولٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ.

"The believing men and the believing women are helpers of each other. They enjoin the good and prohibit the evil, they establish salâh and give zakâh, and they obey Allâh and His Messenger. It is to these people that Allâh shall be merciful. Surely Allâh is powerful, wise." (Sûrah at-Tawbah, verse 71)

The guarantee of a wholesome life

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَّلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ.

"Whoever did good, be it man or woman, and is a believer, to him We will give a good life. And We will grant them their reward for the good deeds that they used to do." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 97)

Men and women are mentioned separately

This verse really draws the attention of the mind. In drawing our attention to doing good deeds, Allâh ﷻ mentions males and females separately. In so doing, He shows that the female is also worthy of attention just as the male is. He also shows that the benefit of good deeds is very great. Generally, everyone knows the benefit of good deeds and everyone generally speaks about this benefit. However, the benefit that is mentioned in this verse is very peculiar and also very important. People reciting this verse generally do not think about this benefit. Since the past generations till today, how many people have passed who memorized the Qur'ân! There are so many of them who remember the Qur'ân and there are so many who are yet to come. How many *'ulamâ'* have explained this verse! But very few had the opportunity of pondering over the great glad tiding that is mentioned here. Allâh ﷻ says: "whoever did good" – "be it man or woman" – "to him We will give a good life".

All this moving around that is taking place at present in the world – from America to Indonesia, and then in our Islamic world: from Morocco in North Africa, then Yemen, Indonesia and Malaysia – the essence of all this is how to acquire a good life. What endeavours should be made in this regard? What are the means and ways of achieving this? How can this wealth be acquired? You will see that from the primary schools to the universities, and from the universities to the special centres of

learning, to the academies which have been established specifically to think and ponder, to the great authors – the combined theme and subject of all these is how to acquire such a life. So much so, that politics, elections, democracy and journalism all aid in this matter. The least that they will do is that they will announce that they will show the way to this type of life and guide you towards it.

The guarantee of a good life

Allâh ﷻ conveys a very great glad tiding in this verse. "Whoever did good." The fundamental prerequisite for this is that it has to be done in accordance with the injunction of Allâh ﷻ. It has to be in accordance with the will of Allâh ﷻ. It has to be in accordance with the will and command of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. It has to be in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. It has to be in accordance with the final divine book, the Qur'ân. If all these conditions are fulfilled, We will enable him to enjoy a good life. This includes the life of this world as well. We should not assume that the glad tiding is for the hereafter alone. Allâh ﷻ uses the words حياة طيبة – a good life. Those who know Arabic they will understand that the indefinite particle (نكرة) is used. Allâh ﷻ did not say الحياة الطيبة – the good life. فلنحيينه حياة طيبة – We will enable him to enjoy every type of good life.

All these efforts and endeavours that are being done, all this moving and running around, all these labours, all this remaining awake at night, all these efforts on studying books, studying from primary school till university, acquiring all these degrees – someone chooses engineering, someone chooses language and literature – the common goal and purpose of all of them is to acquire a good life.

A person desires to receive a high salary, that he has a palatial home, that he has the best of cars, and that he be able to travel by plane. When he enters politics, he desires to become the

prime minister and to be a member of parliament. All this is done so that we may be able to live a good and comfortable life. This is known as peace and comfort. These are general words which have lot of meaning. We say that we should live in peace and not in difficulty. That we be able to live a life of peace. Allâh ﷻ has guaranteed this type of life. He says that the only way of achieving this is to do good deeds. If our deeds are in accordance with His injunctions, فلنحيينه "We will enable him..." This word is used with a *lâm* which is brought for emphasis. It can therefore be translated as "We will certainly enable him...".

This is what Allâh ﷻ is saying. We can have no doubt whatsoever in the words and statements of Allâh ﷻ. However, in order to give us additional peace of mind, in order to give men and women additional peace of mind, Allâh ﷻ uses the emphatic *lâm* and says: "We will certainly enable him to enjoy a good life. Why are you running around in this world? Why is your health being placed into danger? Why is all this competition? For what is all this moving about? All this is in order to live a good life.

Some people consider a good life to be one wherein a person receives a high salary. When in actual fact, there is no guarantee whatsoever in enjoying a good life if you earn a high salary. We can show you thousands of examples wherein a person is earning a high salary but he is not enjoying a good life. Either his health is bad, there is mutual dissent, there is no internal peace, there is some fear, there is some danger, there is some illness, there is some impediment, something has happened, he has some misgivings, his health is also gone bad – he is earning a high salary, he has a palatial home, he has an expensive car, he has children – yet he is not experiencing any satisfaction and enjoyment in his life. He does not have the gift of a bountiful life.

This is something to think about. Allâh ﷻ says that whoever acts on Our injunctions, on Our Sharî'ah, on the orders of Our Messenger ﷺ - who does not even look at what customs have to say, he does not even look at what can be a source of pride to him, he does not look at what can earn him praise and honour, he does not look at what can earn him wealth – he does not think about all this nor should he think about all this. He should only say: "This is the order of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ." How should a marriage take place, how should children be brought up, what type of life should be practised in the home - that ṣalâh should be performed punctually, there should be *purdah*, there should be shame and bashfulness, there should be respect for each other, there should be no pride, there should be no arrogance, there should be no extravagance and lavishness, there should be no prohibited customs – it should not be considered easy to please others while the displeasure of Allâh ﷻ is being earned.

Allâh ﷻ says that if these things are not found, We shall certainly enable him to live a good life. In other words, in this world [and in the hereafter as well]. There are not only thousands but millions of examples of this. If you study the Ḥadîth, you will see that those homes and families in which the Sharî'ah is adhered to, on which the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ are practised upon, and a model and form of Islamic life is chosen, when [un-Islamic] customs are not adhered to and [un-Islamic] traditions are not looked at, rather the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ are inquired and asked about. Those people, families, tribes, countries, civilizations and societies who have acted on this, Allâh ﷻ enabled them to taste the life of paradise in this very world. There is no doubt in this. I am not exaggerating in this regard. They tasted the life of paradise in this very world. It seemed to them that they were in paradise. There is mutual love everywhere, the rights of each other are being fulfilled, no

one's rights are trampled upon, no one is looked down upon with contempt and degradation, no vain talk is being engaged, there is no unlawful income. They merely place their trust in Allâh ﷻ, they engage in the remembrance of Allâh ﷻ, they offer their ṣalâh punctually, they consume lawful sustenance, let alone unlawful wealth, they do not even allow an unlawful coin to enter the house. The houses in which these things are found are a reflection of the houses of paradise. The castles and palaces of kings and rulers may be sacrificed for such homes. These castles and palaces appear like jails and prisons before these homes. These castles and palaces may look very captivating outwardly, they may have massive walls – they may have everything, but within them is a life of hell. There is no love between husband and wife. There is no love between mother and child. Neither does the mother possess that affection nor does the child have that respect. Neither is the weak shown any care nor is any help offered to the poor. There is nothing but eating, drinking, pride, arrogance, and showing off in these palatial homes.

You should bear all this in mind. Allâh ﷻ has given you this opportunity that man and woman can both endeavour to life a life in accordance with the Sharî'ah, to obey Allâh ﷻ, to follow the Sharî'ah of Muḥammad ﷺ and thereby attain to those highest forms of progress – the highest forms of spiritual progress. This is because this wealth, this wealth of knowledge is not confined to men. It is for men and women.

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Basic guidelines for a married life

يَاأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالاً كَثِيْرًا وَّنِسَآءً ج وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ الَّذِيْ تَسَآءَلُوْنَ بِهٖ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ط اِنَّ اللهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا.

"O people! Continue fearing your Sustainer Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate, and out of the two He spread out many men and women. Continue fearing Allâh through Whom you ask of one another, and be mindful of your relatives. Surely Allâh is watchful over you." (Sûrah an-Nisâ', verse 1)

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهٖ وَلاَ تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُوْنَ.

"O believers! Continue fearing Allâh as He ought to be feared and do not die except as Muslims." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 102)

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلاً سَدِيْدًا يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا.

"O believers! Continue fearing Allâh and speak honourable words. That He may set right for you your works and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allâh and His Messenger – he has achieved a supreme triumph." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verses 70-71)

Marriage is one continuous act of worship

This marriage, this covenant is not the mere completion of some social or natural necessity. Rather, it is an act of worship. It remained a *Sunnah* of the Prophets. It is the beloved *Sunnah* and salient feature of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. It therefore has an important message and conveys an important responsibility of Allâh's ﷻ worship, His servitude and one's own responsibility. At the same time, it also reminds one of the injunctions that are connected to it and of its rights and duties.

The verses that have been recited are normally recited when a marriage is solemnized. These verses are quite well known and established. They have a complete message for a blissful duty and also for one's entire life. They contain the touchstone and

guidance for one's entire life. They contain Allâh's ﷻ injunctions and instructions for one's entire life.

The first verse is from Sûrah an-Nisâ'. The status of women can be gauged from this that a lengthy chapter of the Qur'ân has been revealed in their name. From this we learn that women hold a certain position in Islamic society, they have a certain status, they enjoy certain rights and they bear certain responsibilities. There are certain injunctions concerning them. In the first verse, Allâh ﷻ says: يـــا أيهـــا الناس – O people! This is because such a form of address is directed towards humanity, it is directed towards the heart. O people! Since you are humans, you have certain needs, you have natural requirements. Your religious, natural and moral requirements are that you need a companion in life. You need a partner with whom you could fulfil your life in a religious manner, in a natural manner and in an innate manner. Allâh ﷻ Himself addresses us saying: O people! Fear and bear in mind your Sustainer who created you from a single soul and then created a partner for you from that very single soul.

The beginning of the human race

In this verse, Allâh ﷻ mentions the beginning of the human race. This is a very blessed beginning. The history of the world commences from here. It is of concern to all of us. It concerns our forefathers as well. It concerns the past generations. *Inshâ Allâh*, it will be of concern to our latter generations as well. It is through the beginning of the human race that this world and this life got some meaning and some value and worth. Allâh ﷻ says that He commenced the creation of this world from a single soul. Together with this, He created its partner as well. These two got together through marriage, in a religious manner, in a moral and legal manner, in accordance with the order of Allâh ﷻ. This relationship which they established was so blessed that this entire world is inhabited through it. This world

would have been deserted and desolate were it not for the human race. By reminding us of this beginning, Allâh ﷻ uses it as a good omen and a glad tiding to tell us that the getting together of these two [man and woman, husband and wife] should not be considered to be something insignificant and inconsequential. In the beginning also, there were only two [Âdam ﷺ and Ḥawwâ ﷺ]. From these two, Allâh ﷻ created such a huge progeny.

This is a reminder of such a blessed incident from which man can take admonition and attain peace and confidence. And from which he can harbour many great hopes in Allâh ﷻ.

Allâh ﷻ says that you should fear and think of Him who created you from a single soul. Such an enormous world and yet from just a single soul! Together with this, He also created his partner in life. He caused both of them to get together. From this man and woman, He created so many men and women that no census taker, no historian and no accountant can count.

So Allâh ﷻ says that you should fear and you should feel shy of that Allâh in whose name you ask of each other. This one family asks from the other family. One noble Muslim family asks from another noble Muslim family – that Allâh ﷻ has given us everything, He has given our son everything, He has given him life, He has given him intelligence and perception, He has given him knowledge, and He has given him various other capabilities. However, there is a vacuum in his life. This vacuum cannot be filled without a life-companion and without a life-partner. Therefore, give us a life-companion [for our son].

A relationship of asking and giving

This is also a question, and a very cultured question. But it is still a question. Our entire life is a net of questions and answers in which every link of this net is strongly bound to the other. No one can be excluded from this. Every human asks, and

every human is asked [every human begs and is begged of]. Even the greatest of humans is compelled to ask [at some time or the other]. A transaction of buying and selling, what is it? It is a question. What is this relationship between the ruler and the ruled? It is one of question and answer [asking and being asked]. What are these mutual relationships of friendship? They are relationships of asking and giving. What is this teaching and learning? What is this reading and writing all about? It is one of question and answer between teacher and student. You will see that this relationship of asking and giving pervades our entire life. If a student is studying, he is the one who questions and asks. If a teacher is teaching, he is the one who is questioned. In like manner, whoever has something which someone else does not have, then the one who asks for it is the questioner and the who has it is the questioned. At the same time, the one who is questioned [or asked] – he also questions [or asks] someone else. No one in this world is excluded from asking. Even the most honourable of people, even the king of a kingdom has to ask and question. Even though he may be a very honourable questioner, even though he may be a questioner who possesses great authority, he is nevertheless a questioner. He also has some need. If there are no humans in his kingdom, if there is no one to fulfil his tasks, if there are no subjects in his kingdom – how can he be called a king? How can it be a kingdom?

Allâh ﷻ says that you should fear Him. You should keep Him in mind in whose name you ask of each other. How did you get the courage to ask [propose] to such a member [woman] of a family on whom outsiders cannot set their eyes, who is kept in *purdah*, whose honour is considered the honour of the family? How did you get the courage to ask for her? This was through the name of Allâh ﷻ. This was because of the relationship of Islam. This was because of the common bond of Islam. This was something that brings two families together. Which brings

individuals together. At times, it brings two nations together. At times, it brings two progenies together. So the Allâh in whose name you asked – the boy's family asked the girl's family – do not consider this name [of Allâh ﷻ] to be of benefit only for this purpose. You should always respect and honour this name. When this name is mentioned, honour it and fulfil its rights. When the *adhân* is called, His name is mentioned. When the injunctions of the Sharî'ah are explained, His name is mentioned. When the lawful and the prohibited (*halâl* and *harâm*) is discussed, it is His name that is in the centre of all these discussions. When anyone threatens another and says: "Fear Allâh ﷻ", it is His name that is mentioned. Allâh ﷻ says that this is a very selfish and shameful thing – that a person fulfils his objective by taking His name and then forgets Him. This is not becoming of a Muslim. He therefore says: "Continue fearing Allâh through Whom you ask of one another."

Be mindful of your relatives as well

والأرحام : and be mindful of your relatives as well. Today [in this new marriage], a new relationship is being established. Very often it happens that when a new relationship is established, it is considered necessary to forget about the old relationships and relatives. This conduct is found in certain societies and certain cultures. However, Allâh ﷻ says that this should not be the case. Blessing be on this new relationship, however, all previous relationships should still be in place. All the rights, duties and responsibilities are still in their place. The mother still holds her position. The father still holds his position. Sisters still hold their position. Brothers still hold their position. All these relationships do not come to an end with the establishment of this new relationship. You should therefore be mindful of your relatives and fulfil the due right of each one.

This advice applies to the groom, the bride and to their respective families.

If anyone says that this is merely a case of time. Who is looking and who knows [whether we are fulfilling these duties to our relatives or not]. Then Allâh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ اللهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"Surely Allâh is watchful over you."

Allâh ﷻ is with everyone at all times.

Remain a Muslim till your very death

The second verse which I recited at the beginning is this:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ.

"O believers! Continue fearing Allâh as He ought to be feared."

Do not set the criterion for this fear from your side – by thinking that we fear Him a lot. Rather it should be what Allâh ﷻ considers to be fear. It should be what the Sharî'ah considers to be fear. This is the real meaning of fearing Allâh ﷻ. This is also referred to as caution, and being on one's guard at all times. It refers to acting in accordance with the injunctions of Allâh ﷻ. This is what is considered. You should therefore fear Allâh ﷻ as He ought to be feared.

وَلاَ تَمُوْتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُوْنَ

"and do not die except as Muslims"

This could only have been said by the Messenger of Allâh ﷻ. No person who is congratulating you and even no close relative would have said this on this occasion. The Messenger ﷺ is the real Messenger of Allâh ﷻ. He announces such facts and truths that never come to an end. May Allâh ﷻ bless you. May He bestow you many other occasions of blessing. May this be a

chain of many occasions of happiness – *inshâ Allâh*. However, you should not forget that you have to leave this world.

وَلاَ تَمُوْتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُوْنَ

"and do not die except as Muslims"

Live your life as obedient servants of Allâh ﷻ. When you leave this world, leave as obedient servants of Allâh ﷻ. Our heads should be in submission before Allâh ﷻ. Our hearts must be filled with His love and with the respect of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Our tongues must be uttering the *kalimah*.

After this, the last verse that is recited before the proposal and acceptance is this:

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلاً سَدِيْدًا.

"O believers! Continue fearing Allâh and speak honourable words. That He may set right for you your works and forgive you your sins (Sûrah al-Aḥzâb, verses 70-71)

This is not something that is unalterable – that you verbally said that you accept [this girl in marriage]. Rather, when you say that you have accepted, you should fully ponder over it and you should fully bear in mind all the responsibilities that go with it – that what are you saying, what does it mean, what are its demands, how far are its consequences?

Allâh ﷻ says: "O believers! Continue fearing Allâh and speak honourable words." If you have habituated yourself in speaking honourable words, if your character has been properly developed, if your moral fibre has been developed, if the principles of your life have been made – then what will the consequence of all this be? Not that this marriage contract will be valid. Rather, the consequence will be that:

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ

"He may set right for you your works".

Look at the deterioration of the entire world today. There is everything in our civilization today. All the resources and means are found. There are so many inventions. There are so many means of comfort. But what is it that is missing? There is no awareness of responsibilities. Man does whatever he wills in order to achieve his goal. He then forgets [Allâh ﷻ]. Allâh ﷻ therefore says [that if you remember Him], then through the blessing of this remembrance "He may set right for you your works". The pivot of civilization will sit in its place. The disposition of society will be set right. Everyone will experience peace and comfort. The situation will not be such that the one who is in the business place is not bothered about the one who is engrossed in his work in the forest. Rather, through this remembrance and through these honourable words, Allâh ﷻ will "set right for you your works".

وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ

"and forgive you your sins."

This marriage is an act of worship. It is the *Sunnah* of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Allâh ﷻ will therefore forgive you your sins through it.

A marriage ceremony is generally considered to be a customary and social function. When in actual fact it is an act of worship. The life that is to follow is supposed to be a life of worship. Shâh Muḥammad Ya'qûb Ṣâḥib *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* used to say that as long as a person is in his ṣalâh, he receives reward for it. Once he makes *salâm* [and ends his ṣalâh], the reward comes to an end. However, when a person gets married, he receives reward from the beginning till the very end [of his marriage or the end of his life]. He will earn and bring it to his

chain of many occasions of happiness – *inshâ Allâh*. However, you should not forget that you have to leave this world.

وَلاَ تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُوْنَ

"and do not die except as Muslims"

Live your life as obedient servants of Allâh ﷻ. When you leave this world, leave as obedient servants of Allâh ﷻ. Our heads should be in submission before Allâh ﷻ. Our hearts must be filled with His love and with the respect of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Our tongues must be uttering the *kalimah*.

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wife. He will feed his wife. If he does this with this intention, he will be rewarded. He speaks with love and affection to her. He lives with her. He will continue receiving rewards for all this. Allâh ﷻ then says:

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا

Whoever obeys Allâh and His Messenger – he has achieved a supreme triumph."

The importance of justice and righteousness in human society

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ وَإِيْتَآئِ ذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ.

"Allâh enjoins justice, the doing of good, and the giving to one's kinsfolk. He forbids indecency, all that runs counter to reason, and from rebellion. He admonishes you so that you may take heed." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 90)

The manual for life

The present verse of the Qur'ân is generally a part of the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*). Muslims hear it and read it every week. Since we are not conversant with the Arabic language, we generally do not consider the sermons and the ṣalâhs worthy of contemplation and reflection. We consider this to be a mere part of an act of worship. What are the lessons in this? What is the message in this? We do not consider it necessary to ponder over this or to inquire from someone who knows. This verse is also from among these things which we generally do not ponder over. This verse is actually a manifesto for our entire life, it is a code of conduct, a code of law, a directive.

Allâh ﷻ orders justice and the doing of good. He does not say with whom you should mete out just and with whom you should do good. He issues a general directive of justice and doing good. Every person has to mete out justice, every person has to do good and every person has to do acts of virtue.

Thereafter, when Allâh ﷻ talks about giving and spending, He gives us certain specifics.: "and the giving to one's kinsfolk". But even in this, He makes no mention of blood relations. He does not say that you should give to your paternal or maternal cousins or to your own children. Rather, He says that you should give to your kinsfolk, those who are close to you. These people are of several types: they could be close to you on the

basis of being your relatives, they could be close to you because they are your neighbours, they could be close to you because they are from your homeland, they could be close to you because they engage in the same occupation as you. Allâh ﷻ gives details in this regard at other places in the Qur'ân. Some relatives are close while others are distant. There is also leeway in this regard. This is not confined to blood relations.

Thereafter Allâh ﷻ forbids you from indecency, all that runs counter to reason, and from rebellion. He admonishes you so that you may take heed.

Today, justice is done after looking at the face of someone, in weighing and measuring, in taking care of someone and after pondering over it. If the matter is with one's friend, one who is of your religion, one who is of your family, one who is of your tribe – then your hearts open up to do justice. You feel an urge to do justice. It seems easy for you to do justice. But if the matter is with someone with whom you have no blood relationship, wherein there is no real material benefit for you, wherein there is no praise for you – in fact there is the possibility of criticism – then in such cases, you do not step towards that place in order to do justice, you will not lift a pen to do justice. Justice also needs some trademark, some family relationship, some tribal relationship, some territorial and national relationship.

However, justice that is true justice, justice that is considered to be an injunction of Allâh ﷻ, justice that is considered to be a right of someone, justice that is considered after accepting certain truth, justice that is without any resentment, justice that is unprejudiced – to do justice like this is very difficult. Justice of this nature can only be meted out by those servants of Allâh ﷻ who have the fear of Allâh ﷻ in their hearts, who have respect for humanity and who understand that the entire creation is the family of Allâh ﷻ.

The entire creation is the family of Allâh ﷻ

A Hadîth states:

الخلق عيال الله

The entire creation and the entire human race are all the family of Allâh ﷻ. This is the limit of what this religion [of Islam] has said – this religion which cannot tolerate even the slightest spark against the concept of *tauḥîd*. You know very well that every single thing that could injure the concept of *tauḥîd* is abhorred. So much so, that even in counting, odd numbers are preferred to even numbers. The religion that is so sensitive about the oneness of Allâh ﷻ, now says that the entire creation is the family of Allâh ﷻ. This is a very great thing. One third of the Qur'ân is on the concept of *tauḥîd*. Sûrah al-Ikhlâṣ is referred to as one third of the Qur'ân. What does this entire chapter entail:

قُلْ هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ. اَللهُ الصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ ۙ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ.

"Say: 'He is the one Allâh.' Allâh is self-sufficient. He has neither begotten anyone nor is He begotten from anyone. There is no one equal to Him.'"

That Islam which considers Sûrah al-Ikhlâṣ as the heart of the Qur'ân and refers to it as one third of the Qur'ân – that very same Islam says that the creation of Allâh ﷻ and the human creation of Allâh ﷻ - irrespective of which religion and creed these humans belong to, irrespective of which region and which country they come from, irrespective of which ancestry they come from, irrespective of what colour they are, irrespective of which land they come from and of what blood they are – they are all referred to as the family and people of Allâh ﷻ. Allâh ﷻ has taken the responsibility of sustaining and nurturing all humans.

From among the humans, who will be the beloved ones of Allâh ﷻ? They are not the ones who engage in abundant

worship and excessive remembrance. Rather, the most beloved in His eyes are those who provide the most benefit to His family. Had any other religion [apart from Islam] said that all humans are the family of Allâh ﷻ, the mind would have been able to accept it. The surprising thing is that the religion which is so sensitive in the matter of *tauḥîd* – that no other religion is like it – that very Islam states that the entire creation is the family of Allâh ﷻ. This is the height of what this religion has said. Nothing can be said after this.

Justice is colourless

Allâh ﷻ did not confine justice and the doing of good with anyone in particular. It is actually colourless like the rains that fall down from the skies. If you were to pour this colourless rain water in a coloured bottle, it will appear coloured. But when that water fell from the skies, it had no colour. In like manner, justice and the going of good have no colour. Yes, if the person who is meting out justice is a Muslim, we will say that he is a just Muslim person. If the person is a Hindu, we will say that he is a just Hindu person. The "Muslim" and the "Hindu" are different colours of bottles. But justice and the doing of good have no colour – they are colourless. They will remain colourless and they ought to remain colourless.

The verse reads:

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ

"Allâh enjoins justice and the doing of good."

These words are of a general nature. Allâh ﷻ did not say:

إن الله يأمر بالعدل مع المسلمين، إن الله يأمر بالإحسان إلى المسلمين

"Allâh enjoins justice with the Muslims. Allâh enjoins the doing of good to the Muslims."

Allâh ﷻ is referred to as:

رَبُّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

"The Sustainer of the worlds."

He is not referred to as:

رب المسلمين، رب اليهود، رب المسيحيين، رب العرب، رب العجم

"The Sustainer of the Muslims, the Sustainer of the Jews, the Sustainer of the Christians, the Sustainer of the Arabs, the Sustainer of the non-Arabs."

The Sustainer of all the worlds, the stars, the moon, the sun, the galaxy, the system of the sun, all the continents of the world, all the plants, all the animals – in short, the Sustainer of the entire universe has decreed that justice and the doing of good should be absolutely universal. This is not a national, regional or family justice. It is a universal justice. This is the universality in the verse:

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ

"Allâh enjoins justice and the doing of good."

At another place in the Qur'ân, Allâh ﷻ says:

وَلاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُوْا، اِعْدِلُوْا، هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى

"Never abandon justice on account of enmity with any people. Establish justice. This is closest to piety." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 8)

If you have any complaint, ill-feeling or disinclination towards any group, any people or any brotherhood, then this should not cause you to do injustice to them. Whenever the occasion to establish justice presents itself, and whenever you have to weigh, never allow the scale [of justice] to tilt in any way. Fulfil the right completely. Do justice because this is what

pleases Allâh ﷻ and this is what entails acting according to His dictates.

Remember! Justice, equity and the doing of good have all got to be universal. It is applicable to all of us. Irrespective of which nation and which religion we belong to. Our Creator, our Sustainer and Nourisher and our Master has ordered us that there should be no differentiation in establishing justice and doing good. No one should be given preference in this regard.

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ

"Allâh enjoins justice and the doing of good."

Allâh ﷻ orders us to adopt the principles of justice. To make the doing of good our hallmark. Justice (*'adl*) means to give whatever is the due. The doing of good (*ihsân*) means that we should give even more than what is due. If someone treats you unjustly, and you reply with justice, then this will be your *ihsân*. This verse teaches the highest level of character.

Three pillars of a healthy society

لاَ خَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰهُمْ إِلاَّ مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ أَوْ إِصْلاَحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ.

"Not good are most of their deliberations except he who enjoins charity or good deeds or reconciliation among the people." (Sûrah an-Nisâ', verse 114)

If you were to ponder, you will conclude that these three things are such that a righteous society can be established on them. They are the three pillars of society.

Sadaqah or charity: as long as there is no concern for each other's well being, the aspiration to help one's fellow human will never become embedded in the heart. The person will not be prepared to give preference to others over himself. In such a case, no society can be established.

Ma'rûf or good deeds: the word *ma'rûf* is one of the words of the Qur'ân that cannot be translated. It refers to the following things: something that is logical and considered to be good, something that is included in *'urf* (convention and tradition), something that is unanimously considered to be good by all those who are of sound temperament. The *ma'rûf* of each place will be different from that of another place. The *ma'rûf* of this place will be according to the norms of this place, while the *ma'rûf* of another place will be according to the norms of that place.

Reconciliation among people: generally we see that there is enmity between families and tribes. In other words, their mutual relations are severed. This sickness has spread into towns, villages and small rural communities as well. This is more so were supposedly "noble" people are living. This could also be understood as where leaders are living. Seeing that they are leaders, they take a leading role in the severance of these relations. We could also explain these words as: there is

nothing but injustices that take place. And all that we see is war and argumentation.

Maulânâ Ilyâs *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* used to say that a thief will only go where there is wealth and riches. Therefore, the higher a person is, the more will Satan attack him. Therefore, these noblemen, these shuyûkh, Siddîqîs, Fârûqîs, Ansârîs, Qurayshîs, their different branches, these Uthmânîs, 'Alawîs and 'Abbâsîs – Satan is extremely successful wherever they are. This is because it is easier for Satan to cause one to disparage the other or to complain about the other. Their traditional and conventional status is higher. They have certain expectations. They have certain habits. They consider certain things to be their right. It is through these paths that Satan approaches them. [For example, he whispers to them saying:] "Look! That person did not greet you properly. He considers you to be insignificant. Your financial position has gone a bit weak. He is therefore not bowing in greeting you." The person's heart is no longer clean and pure [because he is harbouring these evil thoughts].

These three pillars are such that they are co-joined and connected in every place: charity, doing good, and reconciliation among people. These are required at every point and place. No sooner the doors of charity are shut, the doors of love become shut. To smile is also an act of charity. To speak sweetly and cordially is also an act of charity. If the whip of a rider falls down while the latter is sitting on his horse, and you pass it to him then this is also an act of charity. To remove a thorn from the path is also an act of charity. There are numerous forms of charity. Allâh ﷻ merely mentioned one charity because it entails all these. In short, the desire to do good, the desire to worry about the welfare and well-being of the next person, the desire to help the next person – without this, no society and no collective life can come into existence.

Even if it does come into existence, it cannot continue its existence.

Thereafter, *ma'rûf* and reconciliation between people. This is something that could be told by the Qur'ân alone. This is also a miracle of the Qur'ân. The entire human civilization and human society is based on this – charity, *ma'rûf* and reconciliation between people.

Today, you will see that people are acting against this everywhere. The door of charity is shut at some places while the door of *ma'rûf* is shut at other places. At some places, both these are found but the door of reconciliation between people is shut. There are fifty people who are destroying the society and causing enmity therein, while there is just one person to cause reconciliation. We should therefore bear these three pillars in mind.

There is a fourth precondition that Allâh ﷻ attached to all this, viz. there has to be a good intention in doing these works.

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ

"And whoever does this for the pleasure of Allâh."

A good act can be done for political motives as well. It can also be done for social and material motives. These are all different motives. However, Allâh ﷻ passed His decision here:

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا

"And whoever does this for the pleasure of Allâh, We shall give him a great reward."

Whoever does a good act for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ will be rewarded. It should not be that we do something only when someone else does it. Or that we do it in order to enjoy a good life. No! Rather, it should be solely for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ.

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CHAPTER SIX

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is my belief that knowledge is a single entity that cannot be divided. It is not correct to divide it into old and new, east and west, theoretical and practical. 'Allâmah Iqbâl has rightly said:

دلیلِ کم نظری قصه جدید وقدیم

"It is a proof of short-sightedness to differentiate between old and new."

I believe in knowledge as a truth which is that religion of Allâh ﷻ which is not the possession of any country or nation. Nor should it be like this. Even in the profusion of knowledge, I see a oneness. That "oneness" is truthfulness, it is the quest for the truth, it is to have an intellectual yearning, and to experience happiness at finding it.

I am not of the opinion that the person who wears the "uniform" of knowledge, literature, poetry, philosophy, wisdom – then he alone is considered to be a scholar and an intellectual. And that the person who does not have this uniform, is considered to be unworthy of speaking and unworthy of being listened to. I believe in the universality and originality of knowledge in which the guidance of Allâh ﷻ has remained in every era and time. If there is sincerity and a genuine desire, then at no time is there any shortcoming in the bestowal of Allâh ﷻ.

Maulânâ Abul Ḥasan 'Alî Nadwî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh.*

An unanticipated beginning

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ. خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.

"[O Prophet!] Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation]. Who created man from a clot of blood. Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind. He is the one who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know." (Sûrah al-Alaq, verses 1-5)

This is the first revelation that was sent to Rasûlullâh ﷺ in the cave of Ḥirâ. It was after a lengthy period of 600 years that the connection between the earth and the heavens, rather between the heavens and the earth, was established through divine revelation and prophet-hood. (This lengthy period of time passed from the time 'Îsâ ﷺ left this world and Muḥammad ﷺ came into this world).

In this first revelation, no positive order was issued to worship Allâh ﷻ, to gain His recognition or to obey Him. Nor was there any negative order to leave idols or to speak against *jâhilîyyah* and its customs and ways. This, not withstanding the fact that all these things were important in their place, and were expounded upon in their respective times and places. Rather, this first revelation commenced with the word اقرأ – read!

This historical incident made its mark and gave the historians and thinkers new and wide horizons to ponder and reflect. This was an eloquent and clear reference of this fact that through this unlettered Prophet [Muḥammad ﷺ], humanity and the history of religions were going to go through a new phase. Which, in the widest and deepest sense, would be a wide and progressive phase for reciting, reading and writing. It would be brilliant era for the kingdom of knowledge. Knowledge and religion will together bring a new humanity into existence and perfection.

However, the commencement of this knowledge [learning and teaching] shall be in the laps of that prophet-hood and in the name of that Master who created man and this universe. This is so that the person [who is studying] may be dyed in the correct colour of conviction and recognition of Allâh ﷻ. That he is able to continue his journey in His light and under His guidance. Allâh ﷻ therefore said:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ

Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation].

Together with this, man also learns his reality and his composition. So that he does not forget his position and does not go beyond the limit. That he does not become deluded by his knowledge, intellect, craftsmanship, profession, and his victories with regard to the subjugation of the universe. Allâh ﷻ therefore said:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

"Who created man from a clot of blood."

Allâh ﷻ then honoured the pen and increased its value and worth. He enumerates its achievements in the field of knowledge, recitation, education and training. To have this knowledge was not easy for those living in Mecca and the Arabian peninsula. This knowledge was confined to just a few people. An educated person in the Arabian peninsula was therefore referred to as *al-Kâtib* – the writer. It is in this context that Allâh ﷻ said:

اَلَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

"He is the one who taught by the pen."

Allâh ﷻ then makes reference to this capability of man that he is able to acquire new and the latest knowledge of religion, the universe, sciences, crafts, inventions and discoveries. In so

doing, he can widen the borders of his knowledge. However, the source and basis for all this is divine education and the creation of man in such a way that he is able to turn the unknown into the known, the absent into the present. Allâh ﷻ therefore says:

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

"He taught man that which he did not know."

The four-pronged responsibility of prophet-hood

هُوَ الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ، وَإِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلَالٍ مُّبِيْنٍ.

"It is He who raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom. And before this they were lying in manifest error." (Sûrah al-Jumu'ah, verse 2)

In the above verse, Allâh ﷻ speaks about Rasûlullâh ﷺ and the duties and responsibilities that go with the mantle of prophet-hood. These are the four departments of prophet-hood which Allâh ﷻ gave to His deputies and representatives. This is a four-pronged responsibility.

Recitation

The first responsibility and the first department is that of reciting the verses. Reciting the verses of the Qur'ân to the people. This is such an important factor and such a noble duty that Allâh ﷻ mentions it first among the departments of prophet-hood. Another verse reads thus:

يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهٖ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ

"Reciting to them His verses and teaching them the Book."

Teaching of the Book and wisdom have been mentioned first. This is in accordance with the context and theme. This is the field of those who have deep insight – they will tell us why it is mentioned first in this context while it is mentioned last in another context. They will tell us the circumstance of the verse and the central theme of the chapter. This is something for them. Teaching of the Book entails Islamic sciences. It entails teaching the Qur'ân, Hadîth and *tafsîr*.

Purification of the soul

The second responsibility is that of purification of the soul. This removes base qualities – it removes jealousy, it removes severity, it removes love for this world and love of fame. Instead of all this, it embeds love for Allâh ﷻ, love for the hereafter and desire for paradise in the hearts. The word يزكيهم means nurturing of the soul, culturing of the soul, removal of base qualities, creation of virtuous qualities, and creating that attribute which is mentioned at another place in the Qur'ân:

وَلٰكِنَّ اللهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الإِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ، وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ، أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُوْنَ.

"However, Allâh placed the love of imân in your hearts and beautified it in your hearts, and placed the repugnance of unbelief, sinning and disobedience in your hearts. It is such who are on the path of virtue." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verse 7)

The purpose behind the revelation of the Qur'ân is not confined to its preservation in the form of letters and words in books, thereafter in the hearts of people, so that people may be able to recite it, listen to it, memorize it, and continue reciting it. Rather, a very important purpose of the Qur'ân is the reformation of beliefs and the reformation of the hearts and souls. Rasûlullâh ﷺ accomplished both these duties. The Sahâbah ﷺ were a living testimony to this endeavour of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Teaching the Book

The third and fourth responsibilities are teaching the Book and wisdom. The word حكمة refers to virtuous morals and habits. Our teacher and the scholar of his time, 'Allâmah Sayyid Sulaymân Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* is of the opinion that wherever the word حكمة is mentioned in the Qur'ân, it refers to أخلاق – morals. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ

"We bestowed wisdom to Luqmân."

After this verse, there is an entire list of morals and noble characteristics and habits. So Allâh ﷻ first used the word حكمة and thereafter enumerated all the different forms of this حكمة - all of which are connected to morals. In Sûrah al-Isrâ', Allâh ﷻ enumerates an entire list of morals. After enumerating them, He says:

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّآ أَوْحٰى إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ

"All this is part of the wisdom which your Sustainer revealed to you." (Sûrah al-Isrâ, verse 39)

After mentioning virtuous character and morals, Allâh ﷻ uses the word حكمة . From this we learn that the word حكمة refers to morals – good morals and virtuous character.

So the third and fourth thing is to teach the Book and wisdom. The reader first reads. He then proceeds on a course of purification. This includes the *tafsîr* of the Qur'ân, explaining its essentials, portraying its sciences, explaining and expounding on the objectives of the Qur'ân and the objectives of the truth. This is the meaning of:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

"teaching them the Book and wisdom."

There is also this need to create a thorough understanding (*tafaqquh*) in the students of the Qur'ân, those bearing it, and those listening to it. This is what is referred to in the Hadîth:

من يرد الله به خيرا يفقه في الدين

"When Allâh desires good for a person, He gives him a thorough understanding of Islam."

This in reality is the four-pronged responsibility of the bearer of the Qur'ân. It is his responsibility. He is the bearer of its excellence and he is its biography. Irrespective of which place of learning or which *dâr al-'ulûm*, its purpose has to be to prepare such graduates who are able to fulfil all four departments of recitation, teaching the Book, teaching wisdom, and purification of the soul - as representatives and deputies of the Prophets. Recitation and wisdom will both remain deficient as long as purification (*tazkiyah*) is not with them. In other words, our *'ulamâ'* must have come out of the servitude of the soul. The greatest amount of wealth and honour should not be able to move them from their principles, their call, their status and their way of life.

The status of knowledge and the responsibilities of those who possess it

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ. خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.

"[O Prophet!] Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation]. Who created man from a clot of blood. Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind. He is the one who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know." (Sûrah al-Alaq, verses 1-5)

The fate of knowledge is connected to the pen

I involuntarily think of that incident which occurred over 1400 years ago in a dry, arid region of Arabia, on a mountain that was neither high nor green and lush. This incident not only influenced the history of humanity, but had such a deep and eternal impact on the fate and destiny of humanity that an example of this nature cannot be found in history. It has a special connection with "pen and paper" – which are the basis of knowledge, culture, research and writing. And without which these great centres of learning would not have come into existence, nor these libraries which are an embellishment of this world and the value and worth of this life. I am referring to the incident concerning the first revelation which came down to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ near Mecca, in the cave of Hirâ on or about the 6th of August 610 C.E. These are the words of this first revelation:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ. خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.

"[O Prophet!] Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation]. Who created man from a clot of blood. Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind. He is the one who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know." (Sûrah al-Alaq, verses 1-5)

Even in the first instalment of His revelation and even in the first drops of His rain of mercy, the Creator of the universe did not delay nor defer in making this announcement that the fate of knowledge is connected to the pen. In the solitude of the cave of Hirâ, where an unlettered Prophet of Allâh ﷻ went to receive guidance for the people of the world, and whose own condition was that he did not even learn how to hold a pen and who was totally unaware of the art of writing – can you find anything similar to this in history? The high status of this pen can be imagined from the fact that when the first revelation is sent down to an unlettered Prophet, to an unlettered nation, in the midst of an uneducated country (where let alone there being no universities and centres of learning, even the ability to read and write was not common) and when the contact between the heavens and the earth is re-established after many centuries – then it commences with the word اقرأ . The first revelation does not commence with اعبد – worship, it does not commence with صلِّ – offer salâh. Rather, it commences with اقرأ – read.

The person who himself was not educated – revelation comes down to him. And he is ordered to read. In this there is a reference to the fact that the *ummah* that he was to be given will not be a nation of students alone. Rather, it will be a teacher to the world, it will be embellished with knowledge, it will spread knowledge into this world. The era that would come to his share will not be an era of ignorance. It will not be an era of barbarism, it will not be an era of unawareness, it will not be an era of antagonism towards knowledge. Rather, it will be an era of knowledge, it will be an era of intellect, it will be an era of wisdom, it will be an era of construction, it will be an era of human friendship, it will be an era of progress.

Knowledge has to commence in the name of Allâh ﷻ

بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ

"in the name of your Sustainer who created."

A major error that had occurred was that knowledge had been severed from Allâh ﷻ. Knowledge had therefore deviated from the straight path. This severed relationship had now been rejoined. When knowledge was remembered and when it was given this honour, attention was also drawn to the fact that knowledge has to commence in the name of the Sustainer. This is because knowledge is bestowed by Him. It is created by Him. It is only through His guidance that it can make a balanced progress. This was the most revolutionary acclamation, the most revolutionary inspiration and the most thunderous sound which the ears of our world ever heard and which no one could have ever imagined.

If all the literati and intelligentsia of the world were gathered and asked to gauge as to what the first revelation is going to be and what subject will be given first preference in it, then I think that not a single person who was conversant with that unlettered nation, its disposition and its mindset, would have ever said that the first revelation would commence with the word اقـرأ – read! This word entails recitation. It is not even a word that is totally connected to knowledge. In other words, it is related to paper as well. It is related to figures as well. It is related to the pen as well. It is not knowledge that comes through inspiration alone. Rather, it is knowledge that is connected to the pen, it is connected to paper, it is connected to books, it is connected to libraries, it is connected to experiences, it is connected to intelligence.

This religion cannot be separated from knowledge

The temperament and disposition of this religion has been shown that it can never be separated from knowledge. This is because the first message that was given itself says that you should read. How, then, can a Muslim remain unlettered? That Muslim who severs his ties with knowledge is not a true Muslim. He cannot make the claim of being a true representative of Islam. So the first thing is this revolutionary call of اقرأ – read! باسم ربك الذي خلق – in the name of your Sustainer who created. The journey of knowledge has to commence under the guidance of Allâh ﷻ, the wise, the all-knowing. This is because this journey is a very long one. It is very complicated and very dangerous. Highway robbers are lying in wait in broad daylight. There are terrifying and deep pits at every step. There are deep rivers. There are snakes and scorpions at every step. This journey therefore requires the companionship of a perfect guide. In reality, this perfect guide is Allâh ﷻ. Allâh ﷻ therefore said:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ

"Read in the name of your Sustainer who created."

However, this is not mere knowledge and literature. It is not knowledge that merely entails doing some embroidery work, that merely entails playing with toys. It is not knowledge that entails entertainment for the heart. It is not knowledge that entails fighting with each other. It is not knowledge that entails one nation having a conflict with another nation. It is not knowledge that teaches you the means of filling the trench of your stomach. It is not knowledge that merely teaches you to use your tongue. Rather, it is:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ. خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.

"[O Prophet!] Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation]. Who created man from a clot of blood. Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind. He is the one who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know." (Sûrah al-Alaq, verses 1-5)

Read! Your Sustainer is extremely kind. How can He be unaware of your needs and your weaknesses? "Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind." Just imagine! Is there anyone who raised the status of the pen more than Allâh ﷻ? That even in the first revelation in the cave of Hirâ, He did not leave it out! That very pen, which had you searched for in the houses of Mecca, you would probably not have found it. Had you went out in search of it, you would probably found it in the house of Waraqah ibn Naufal or in the house of some scribe (who learnt to read and write in the non-Arab lands). That very pen which was mentioned very little even in Arabic poetry. If you were to read the different collections of the Arab poets, very seldom would you come across the pen being mentioned.

The gist of everything is "Allâh taught man that which he did not know"

Allâh ﷻ then mentions a very revolutionary and eternal fact: that there is no end to knowledge. "Allâh taught man that which he did not know." What is science?! "Allâh taught man that which he did not know." What is technology?! "Allâh taught man that which he did not know." Man is going to the moon. Why is this? "Allâh taught man that which he did not know." This void [in the universe] which we have traversed, the furthest regions of the earth which we have reached, the ropes of the earth which we have drawn, the rays of the sun which we have captured, the pathways that we have made in the midst of the stars – what is all this? "Allâh taught man that which he did not know." Having knowledge of all different things is nothing but the result of "Allâh taught man that which he did not know."

The value of madâris and the duty of their graduates

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً ط فَلَوْ لاَ نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوْآ إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ.

"[It is not possible] for the Muslims to go forth all together [and acquire knowledge of Islam from the centres of learning]. Why, then, did a section from each group not go forth so that they may acquire an understanding of religion and inform their people when they return to them so that they might be on their guard [with regard to the consequences of ignorance and heedlessness]?" (Sûrah at-Taubah, verse 122)

The madâris are mentioned in the Qur'ân

If someone were to ask, "Are the *madâris* mentioned in the Qur'ân? Are their responsibilities and duties mentioned?" I would reply that the present verse has portrayed the duties and responsibilities of *madâris* right till the day of resurrection. In mentioning the responsibility of the *madâris*, this verse states: "It is not practically possible for all the Muslims to leave their homes. Why, then, did a section from each group of Muslims not leave their homes in order to acquire an understanding of religion. Once these people have studied the religion and acquired deep understanding of it, they may return to their homes and their people, warn them of the trials and challenges of the contemporary era and inform them thereof, so that their people may be on their guard concerning these trials and challenges and they may endeavour to save themselves from these trials."

In essence, this is the responsibility of the *madâris*. That they prepare such individuals who are fully aware of the new afflictions and conspiracies of their time and they be fully prepared to combat them.

Although this verse does not specifically mention the *madâris* (Allâh's status is far higher than this also), a complete picture

"[O Prophet!] Read in the name of your Sustainer who created [all the creation]. Who created man from a clot of blood. Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind. He is the one who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know." (Sûrah al-Alaq, verses 1-5)

Read! Your Sustainer is extremely kind. How can He be unaware of your needs and your weaknesses? "Continue reading the Qur'ân, and your Sustainer is most kind." Just imagine! Is there anyone who raised the status of the pen more than Allâh ﷻ? That even in the first revelation in the cave of Hirâ, He did not leave it out! That very pen, which had you searched for in the houses of Mecca, you would probably not have found it. Had you went out in search of it, you would probably found it in the house of Waraqah ibn Naufal or in the house of some scribe (who learnt to read and write in the non-Arab lands). That very pen which was mentioned very little even in Arabic poetry. If you were to read the different collections of the Arab poets, very seldom would you come across the pen being mentioned.

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of the *madâris* is portrayed in it. The need and value of the *madâris* is mentioned, and their duty is also laid down.

Allâh ﷻ says:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً

It is not possible and it is not easy for all the Muslims to leave their homes and to completely shut their eyes from other necessities. In other words, this is something that is not possible, it is unnatural for all Muslims to leave all their responsibilities and go out in order to learn their religion. In such a case, there would be no one tending to the business, there will be no one to buy and sell, there will be no one to fulfill one's needs – the entire city has left in order to become a student of a *madrasah*. This is something that will never happen. This is something that is not practically possible. Allâh ﷻ is not saying such a thing, He is not imposing it on us, nor is He demanding it from us. Allâh ﷻ is the creator of humans. He is fully aware of man's weaknesses:

أَلاَ يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ

"How could it be that He who created should not know? He alone is unfathomable, all aware." (Sûrah al-Mulk, verse 14)

The very weaknesses that are in the human disposition have been placed by Allâh ﷻ. He therefore fully knows the needs of man. He is fully aware of his circumstances and conditions. He therefore does not impose such things that are beyond the capability of man. He says: It is not possible for all the believers to leave their homes all together and take admission in the *madâris*. Or that they emigrate to different lands where they could acquire knowledge, and remain engrossed in this. Allâh ﷻ did not impose this on us.

Before anyone else could offer this excuse and before anyone else could say that this is not possible, Allâh ﷻ said it to us –

that it is not possible for all the Muslims to get up, absolve themselves from all responsibilities and duties and thereafter become students.

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً

"It is not [possible] for the Muslims to go forth all together."

Acquire a thorough understanding of Islam

Why, then, does this not happen that from each group, from each section, from each circle – some people get ready for this task, and they make a firm resolution that they will learn this religion.

فَلَوْ لاَ نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ

"Why, then, did a section from each group not go forth so that they may acquire an understanding of religion."

In other words, from all the different human groupings – occupations, brotherhoods, districts, cities – a group from each of them should become totally devoted to the studying of religion. لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّيْنِ – so that they may acquire an understanding of religion, a deep and wide understanding of religion. That they may acquire the knowledge of the injunctions and regulations of the religion.

The word تَفَقُّه is a very comprehensive word. It includes the following and much more: injunctions and regulations, the wisdom behind these injunctions, the places where these injunctions are to be used, the occasions when they are applicable, the different ways of addressing people and speaking to them. Allâh ﷻ used this word تفقه in such a way, that there cannot be a more comprehensive word than this. "That they may acquire an understanding of religion." The Arabic language has numerous other words for

"understanding". For example, فهـم، معـرفة، تعقـل . However, the word تفقـه has a special meaning. It means: "acquiring a deep understanding of religion", "to have a deep insight into the treasures of religion", "to understand the demands of time and to create a bond and relationship between the changing times and the eternal religion".

The duty of the graduates of the madâris

Allâh ﷻ then says:

لِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوْا إِلَيْهِمْ

"and inform their people when they return to them"

They should then go back to their people [Muslims] and fulfil the responsibility of conveying the message and warning them. In other words, it is not sufficient that they learn for themselves alone and then sit back, thinking that they have done their job. The matter does not end here: that they studied the religion, they acquired an understanding of it, they became jurists, they became *'ulamâ'*, they became *muḥaddithûn*. Rather, Allâh ﷻ says thereafter:

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They should go back and teach their people. The word قـوم - "people" is not in the sense that the Muslims are a people, the Hindus are a people, the Indians are a people, the Arabs are a people. For such expressions, the word شـعوب is used. The word قوم means "a group of humans", "human groups". Therefore, the words "and inform their people" do not mean that the Indian must go back and teach the Indians, the Arab must go back and teach the Arabs. No! Rather, from wherever they came, they should go back there and teach their families, the people of

their districts, the people of their villages, the people of their areas, the people of their brotherhood.

لِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوْا إِلَيْهِمْ

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In this verse, Allâh ﷻ explains the purpose and object behind the thing for which He made us answerable and the thing which He ﷻ urged us to do. First of all, we have to acquire this knowledge and acquire this understanding of religion. This is not knowledge for filling the belly. Such knowledge cannot be referred to as true knowledge and تفقه .

من يرد الله به خيرا يفقه في الدين

"When Allâh ﷻ desires good for a person, He gives him a thorough understanding of religion."

In this, the injunctions and regulations of Islam are included, their underlying reasons, the places of their application, understanding the general application thereof, understanding the specifics thereof – all this is included. Thereafter, Allâh ﷻ says that we do not invite solely for our own reformation, and solely for our own salvation and guidance.

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They should go back to their respective villages and towns and engage in the task of guiding their people. They should engage in admonishing and instructing. They should warn them of the dangers and of those things that would destroy them. They should inform them of the destruction of unbelief. From the destruction of those beliefs that would totally remove a person from Islam, sometimes he goes beyond the boundary of Islam, he is no more counted among the Muslims. Certain beliefs totally snatch one's îmân away. It is as though the person has renegaded.

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So that they may fulfil the responsibility of propagation and warning among their people [Muslims]. If the Muslims are faced with any danger, if they are faced with any matter concerning *halâl* and *harâm*, *îmân* and *kufr*, they should be able to direct them and guide them. They should be able to demonstrate to them the demarcation line between *îmân* and *kufr*. They should be able to tell them: "If you want to understand, we will show you.":

قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى

"Surely guidance has been separated from deviation. Now whoever renounces the devious ones and has conviction in Allâh, then he has held on to the firm bond." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 256)

"This is guidance and this is deviation. This is Islam and this is ignorance. We have shown you. Now whether you follow or not – it is left to you."

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"and inform their people when they return to them"

لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ

"so that they may be on their guard."

In the Qur'ân, the word لَعَلَّ is not used to show doubt. (In the sense that, perhaps something will happen. Rather, everything is certain for Allâh ﷻ). This word is used to show علّة and تعليل – so that. So that they may fear. So that they begin living a life of fear. So that they begin to understand the difference between *halâl* and *harâm*. So that they understand what is destructive and what would give them salvation. They may learn all this and thereafter act accordingly. The words "so that they may be on their guard" include all the above.

This religion is eternal

One thing you should remember is that this religion is eternal. However, times change. Time is a vessel and it continues changing. However, the essence of Islam, the fundamentals of Islam and the teachings of Islam do not change. In order to create a bond and a link between this changing time and this unchanging religion, you need تَفَقُّه . This requires a deep understanding of Islam and it requires إنذار – warning – this entails calling towards practising on Islam, and in the case of not practising, warning and threatening the people of evil consequences.

No change should be permitted to enter the originality and essence of Islam, the essentials of Islam, the facts and demands of Islam. However, that Islam must be able to be with time. It must be able to guide time - irrespective of how much time changes, irrespective of how wide civilization becomes, irrespective of what progress takes place in the different sciences, man may begin to fly in the air, he may begin walking on water, and time may be thousands of kilometres ahead. That person who has acquired the treasure of التفقه في الدين – a thorough understanding of Islam – he will be able to prove in an intellectual and rational way that Islam can still be a guide in these times. It can solve all the problems and needs of today. It can even solve all the riddles and puzzles of time. Let alone being able to move with time, Islam has the ability to show the way to time. It can save time from following the wrong path and it can also rescue the human race from suicide. It is eternal in its place, its teachings and in its facts. Irrespective of how much time progresses, it cannot cause Islam to become old and worn out. You cannot even refer to it as being out of date.

However, time changes. This is its plus point. It is not its evil. It is referred to as time because it can change. It is those old relics that cannot change or those things that do not have any

life in them. Changes, alterations, improvements and progress are all attached to life. Time will therefore change and ought to change. However, Islam does not change like time and also does not lag behind time.

The need and benefit of the *madâris* and their standard bearers is that they maintain and uphold their distinctiveness, their distinction and this bounty of Allâh ﷻ. One is that Islam must remain in its original state as brought by the Messenger of Allâh and as followed and practised by the *Khulafâ' Râshidûn*, the early Muslims and by the entire *ummah* in general. The second thing is that they should not turn away from the demands of time. They should not shut their eyes and ears. Rather, they should look at the changing of time and assess it – that which injunction is it in conflict with and what does it have that can be of benefit, and to what extent it could be accommodated.

Islam should remain in its original form and it must also be able to guide and steer time. It should also be able to take time to account. It should also be able to understand the lawful demands and requirements of time. These should be fulfilled while remaining within the ambit of the Sharî'ah. This is the meaning of تَفَقُّه . A position greater than this is that of *ijtihâd*. For this, there are special requisites and criteria.

For the establishment of *madâris*, for their progress, for their direction, and for direction through them, all the above facts have to be borne in mind.

All praise is due to Allâh ﷻ at the beginning, at the end, externally and internally.

The responsibility of parents and educators in ensuring correct Islamic education and discipline

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا قُوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اللهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ.

"O believers! Save yourselves and your house people from the fire whose fuel is humans and stones. Over it are appointed angels, stern and powerful. They do not disobey Allâh in whatever He commands them. They only do what they have been commanded." (Sûrah at-Tahrîm, verse 6)

This verse really awakens and rouses a person. Were it not for the danger that when something is before you all the time, your attention is drawn away from it and you begin considering it to be something that is part of your everyday life – were it not for this danger, I would have said and I would have emphasized that this verse ought to be written in bold writing and hung onto walls, they ought to be hung in the mosques as well.

Allâh ﷻ says: يـا أيهـا الذين آمنوا - O those people who themselves have brought îmân! The word آمـنوا is in the past tense. Ponder over each word. No word in the Qur'ân is coincidental or in order to fill space. This is not some poetry. Allâh ﷻ could have said:

أيها المؤمنون، أيها المسلمون

"O believers! O Muslims!"

However, He said: يا أيها الذين آمنوا – O those people who themselves have brought îmân!

قُوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

Save your own selves, your family people, those who are related to you, those who are under your supervision from the fire whose fuel is humans and stones.

The addressees of this verse were Muslims. They were the Sahâbah ﷺ who were present during the revelation of the Qur'ân. They were the first addressees. All the Muslim generations, all those who are born and refer to themselves as Muslims till the day of resurrection are addressed in this verse. However, the first addressees were those who had embraced Islam at the hands of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. They had placed their hands in the hands of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. They had the honour of being his Sahâbah. Without doubt, there were also those who were present on the occasion of *Bay'atur Ridwân* – who pledged their allegiance beneath the tree at Hudaybiyah. And regarding whom Allâh ﷻ says:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا.

"Allâh was certainly pleased with the believers when they began pledging their allegiance to you under that tree. He knew what was in their hearts. He then sent tranquillity upon them and rewarded them with a near victory." (Sûrah al-Fath, verse 18)

Those who received this prize and those who received this certificate that Allâh ﷻ is pleased with them – such certified and high ranking people who participated in the *Bay'atur Ridwân* are also included in this verse. The *'Asharah Mubashsharah* (the ten Sahâbah ﷺ who were given glad tidings of paradise in this very world) are certainly included in this verse as well. Other senior Sahâbah ﷺ are also included. The "living martyrs" of Badr and Uhud are also included.

What, then, is the meaning of this verse?

I am now asking you, is there any person who wittingly drives his children and his house-folk into the fire? Will he permit them to fall into the fire? What is the meaning of this that Allâh ﷻ says: O those people who themselves have brought îmân! It is now your duty to save yourselves, to save your family

members from the fire of hell? Have you ever read any incident in Islamic history where the Sahâbah ﷺ (معـــاذ الله) intended to throw their children into the fire? Or that their children wanted to jump into the fire while the Sahâbah ﷺ and the Muslims of that time remained silent, looking at this scene? And that they were happy with this? Have you ever come across such an incident? So has this been unnecessarily said: O those people who themselves have brought îmân! It is now your duty to save yourselves, to save your family members from the fire of hell? What fire was this? When did such an incident take place? Or when was such an incident to take place wherein the children of the Sahâbah wanted to jump into the fire – while their parents were asleep, not bothering in the least? [While they were asleep], Allâh ﷻ sent down this verse and everyone woke up. And everyone became concerned that their children should not jump into the fire. What, then, is the meaning of this verse?

Can the meaning of this verse be anything but that you should save your children and your family members from such things that would convey them towards the fire!? The consequence of which is that they will go to hell!? If this is not the meaning, then which person is such as to see his children going towards the fire and yet does not stop them? The only dangerous thing is that a person does not even know that if he went into the fire he will burn. This would therefore mean that you should save them from such causes and means that would convey them towards the fire of hell. In juridical terms, this is known as contributing factors. In other words, those factors that would convey towards a particular result or consequence. The jurists consider these contributing factors to be included in the consequences as well. For example, a person administers a medicine which results in the death of a patient. Even if this death occurs after some time, this administering of his is synonymous to murder. This is because he chose a cause that would inevitably result in death. The law will also label him a

murderer. The doctors and physicians will also consider him to be a murderer. We can understand that we should guard against such things that would convey us to the fire.

This is the present situation

I am now informing you that this is the present situation: that we do not make arrangements for the religious education of our children. We hand over our children to such environments and at the mercy of such people who are neither obligated to show them mercy, nor claim to have such mercy, who are neither suitable and qualified to impart that education to the children on which lies their salvation. I am referring to that education that was brought by the Prophet ﷺ. That very education which, in the case of not knowing it, would place their îmân into danger and cause their destruction in the hereafter. So we have to now see how is it that this is being tolerated for our children?

The present system of education is not only secular. It is a positive system of education. Hindu mythology is included in it. During the rule of the British, the system of education was secular. There used to be stories about cats and dogs. Many of us had studied under the British system. At that time, the primary books to learn the language did not have any effect on the belief of anyone, they did not create any belief of divinity for anyone, nor did we learn that any creation has any authority in this universe. At that time, the children used to read stories of sheep, panthers, monkeys, foxes, cats and dogs. The children would return home just as they had left in the morning.

But this is not the situation today. The books that are prescribed by the government today are such that they contain lessons, stories and themes which have an impact on one's beliefs. The limitations of the book are generally compensated for by the teacher. The children have to engage in some group work [or

group discussion] that is contradictory to the Islamic teaching of *tauḥîd*.

If you have admitted your child in any school and did not make any outside arrangements [for his Islamic education] then it is as though you have urged your child to continue accepting and believing everything un-Islamic that he learns. If he continues accepting and believing all this, and you have made no outside arrangements [for his Islamic education], he does not even know Urdu whereby he could read some Islamic books, nor is there any *madrasah* or *maktab* in the area which he could attend – then tell me, are you not addressed by these words:

قُوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا

"Save yourselves and your house people from the fire."

Allâh ﷻ says:

O believers! Save yourselves, save your house people, save your relatives. This includes ones house people, ones relatives, ones children, and the entire family unit.

قُوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا

"Save yourselves and your house people from the fire."

Do not remain deluded

Since Allâh ﷻ said this, one could be under the assumption that a person saves himself from many things. He is able to save himself by his plans, through bribery, through plotting, through his intelligence, and through his power as well. It should be remembered that Allâh ﷻ is *'âlimul ghayb* - He knows the unseen and He is the creator of humans.

أَلاَ يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ

"Does He who created not know? He is unfathomable, all aware." (Sûrah al-Mulk, verse 14)

It was also possible for this idea to cross the mind that one should not bother about all this too much in this world. That it is not necessary to work too hard in this world. That it is not necessary to look too far ahead and for too long. When we reach there, we will see what happens. We will do something over there. We will make some plan. There are many life experiences whereby a person reaches the edge of the ocean and is still saved. Sometimes he stands upside down on an elevated building, sometimes he falls from there and is still saved. Some plan or the other is made. There are also things that happen coincidentally. In this way a person is also saved. A person is also survives a fist fight.

Allâh ﷻ knows the unseen. Therefore, after ordering us to save ourselves and our families, He says:

عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ

"Over it are appointed angels, stern and powerful."

Do not be deluded into thinking that we will be saved even on reaching there. On reaching the edge of hell, we will also be saved. That we will save ourselves. That we will save our children as well. This is because there are such angels over this fire who are extremely stern and powerful.

When Allâh ﷻ uses any word, there is nothing better than it thereafter. Our hairs should stand on end at that time. The words غـــلاظ شـــداد are such powerful words that their power and force can only be understood by those who know Arabic. One word غلاظ would have sufficed. But Allâh ﷻ said غلاظ شداد – very stern, very powerful, very decisive, very diligent and very thorough in whatever they do.

لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اللهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ

Allâh ﷻ then says that whatever task they have been allotted with, whatever is their responsibility, whatever task they are appointed to – they do not disobey Him in his regard.

So this verse concerns the question of education, the question of placing people onto the path of Islam, the question of teaching Islam, the question of imparting Islamic education to our children, of providing them with such education that they are saved from the fire of hell, from the wrath of Allâh, from being eligible for the anger of Allâh ﷻ, that their lives be lives of guidance, that their death be a happy death, and that their hereafter be a life of success and salvation.

The importance of technical and scientific education

وَأَنزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ.

"We sent iron – there is intense fighting in it and benefits for people. And so that Allâh may know who helps Him and His Messengers without seeing. Surely Allâh is powerful, mighty." (Sûrah al-Hadîd, verse 25)

Many people, especially those whose education is restricted to "modern sciences", may not have thought that the Qur'ân also makes mention of technical skills. And that it also makes mention of those master craftsmen who, in their times, manufactured things through their crafts, who fulfilled a service to humanity, who protected humanity and those who were under their wing who believed in them. Few people have thought that this is mentioned in the Qur'ân.

Allâh ﷻ mentions this favour of His, and says with due importance, that He sent down iron. Just imagine, that Allâh ﷻ could have used many words. For example, He could have said خلقنا – We created. However, by saying "sent down", there is a special importance in it. The element of Allâh's power and mercy that is included in this word cannot be fulfilled by any other word.

This does not only refer to technology. It also includes architecture, it also includes war, it also includes war exercises and war maneuvers, it also includes various other architectural and defensive tasks. Iron plays a pivotal role in all of these. No technological occupation can be excluded from this.

This is the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân that various other metals have been left out and iron has been singled out. "We sent iron." There is much force in saying this. This is an exposition of Allâh's attribute of Lordship. It also manifests

His loftiness. This iron is not only for the manufacture of swords. It is not confined to the moulding of guns. It is not confined to the manufacture of cartridges. It is not confined to giving shape to these items. منافع للناس – it has benefits for people. Those who know Arabic know very well that when the indefinite article is used, it shows generalness and a wide-range of things. So here Allâh ﷻ says منافع للناس – it has a wide range of benefits for the people.

Allâh ﷻ does not confine Himself to this. He then makes mention of one of His Messengers, Dâ'ûd عليه السلام:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ

We taught him the art of making armour. We bestowed him with knowledge with which he could protect the human body. We made iron soft for him. We gave him the wisdom whereby he could use iron as glass, whereby he could use it as a very weak metal. That it is not only used for destruction, but also for construction. Each of these words is a miracle in itself.

The Qur'ân does not confine all this to a single person. Rather it goes further and mentions the servants (who included jinn and humans) of Sulaymân عليه السلام who was the son of Dâ'ûd عليه السلام. They used to act under the orders of Sulaymân عليه السلام. They used to undertake architectural and building tasks. They used to make whatever he ordered. Even here, it is explicitly stated that they did not do all this for destructive purposes. Seeing that the supervision of Sulaymân عليه السلام is present, that his orders are carried out, that the task is fulfilled under his supervision – then all this will have to be for constructive purposes, for the benefit of the creation. The Qur'ân says:

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

In other words, they do not make whatever they feel like and whatever they want to. Rather, the powers that have been

placed in them are used in accordance with the will of Allâh ﷻ, in accordance with the message that is given to the Prophet, in accordance with the status of the Prophet. These items have to be used in accordance with their demands and their inherent qualities.

The destruction of this world is due to the fact that these things have been used for destructive and passive purposes. But Allâh ﷻ says:

يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

They were not free in the sense that they could not make whatever they wanted, whereby they attacked people, destroyed nations and completely annihilated countries.

Become *'ulamâ'* who have the element of *tarbiyah*

وَلٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبَّانِيّٖنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُوْنَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُوْنَ

"Rather become the men of Allâh as you used to teach the Book and just as you yourself used to study it." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 79)

This verse of the Qur'ân is also a miracle on its own. In fact, it is a collection of miracles. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَلٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبَّانِيّٖنَ

"Rather become the men of Allâh."

Allâh ﷻ uses the word ربانيين which includes *tarbiyah*. In other words, an *'âlim* who, on one hand, has a connection with Allâh ﷻ. His connection with Allâh ﷻ is proper. He has the quality of *ikhlâṣ* – sincerity and devotion. On the other hand, he must have reached the level of îmân and *iḥtisâb*. In other words, he also turns his attention towards *da'wah* (inviting the people), *tarbiyah* (training the people) and *iṣlâḥ* (reforming the people).

As a student of the Arabic language, I do not think that there can be a word that is so comprehensive, meaningful, one that would demand such attention, and one that could invoke such thought. Allâh ﷻ refers to the *'ulamâ'* of the *ummah* and the *'ulamâ'* of Islam as ربانيين . He says: "become the men of Allâh." However, from the attributes of Allâh ﷻ, the word رب has been chosen. In other words, become *'ulamâ'* who have the element of *tarbiyah* in them. Who also have the capability of *tarbiyah*. This is what you refer to as *'ulamâ'*-e-*rabbânîyyîn*. These are the *'ulamâ'*-e-*rabbânîyyîn* in reality.

وَلٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبَّانِيّٖنَ

Allâh ﷻ shall enable them to engage in teaching Islam, in propagating Islam, in reforming [people and society], in acting

placed in them are used in accordance with the will of Allâh ﷻ, in accordance with the message that is given to the Prophet, in accordance with the status of the Prophet. These items have to be used in accordance with their demands and their inherent qualities.

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يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

They were not free in the sense that they could not make whatever they wanted, whereby they attacked people, destroyed nations and completely annihilated countries.

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وَلٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبَّانِيّٖنَ

Allâh ﷻ shall enable them to engage in teaching Islam, in propagating Islam, in reforming [people and society], in acting

on the Sharî'ah, and in acting on the *Sunnah*. Their distinctive feature will be that of îmân and *iḥtisâb*. And this is extremely necessary for the ربانيين – that whatever they do, they do it solely for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ. They should have full conviction in the power and assistance of Allâh ﷻ, and at the same time they should also hope for reward and recompense from Allâh ﷻ.

Allâh ﷻ then says:

بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُوْنَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُوْنَ

"as you used to teach the Book and just as you yourself used to study it."

That you should teach the Book to others. Together with this, the word تدرسون is added. This is something which we all have to ponder over. That an *'âlim-e-rabbânî*, that a complete *'âlim* – even after he has reached a level of perfection, it is still necessary for him to continue studying. His intellectual journey should continue. His intellectual progress should continue.

Students of Islamic sciences are the representatives of the *ummah*, they are the exponents of Islam, they are the ones who clarify the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, they are the ones who invite towards the true religion.

This verse is a complete admonition, a complete call and a complete book for those *madâris* that have been established for the preparation of these *'ulamâ'*. In other words, whom should an *'âlim*, whom should a graduate of these *madâris* adopt as his mentor? What methodology should he adopt? What perception of his responsibilities should he create within him? What comprehensiveness should he create within him? On one hand, his knowledge should be firmly established. He should have full authority over the prophetic sciences. He should have proficiency. He should have mastery. He should have intellectual mastery. And then, together with all this, he should practise on all this. The practise, the desire for worship, the

desire for obedience, and the element of îmân and *iḥtisâb* should all be in accordance with what behoves an *'âlim*. He should have this perception in his mind that he is studying for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ. That when he graduates, he will serve Islam. He should not have this intention that upon graduating, he will go to the U.A.E., to Dubai, to Sharjah, to Saudi Arabia. Here you see him going for ḥajj or 'umrah, while his actual intention is to get a job. And he will get a job too. You will see some of them working for a travel agent and someone is working in a pharmacy. If not, someone has become a *mu'adhdhin*, someone has become a *khaṭîb* (one who delivers sermons). This is not the value of this knowledge. This is not on the category of كونوا ربانيين – become the men of Allâh.

This verse will be recited till resurrection. Allâh ﷻ shall bring forth *'ulamâ'* till resurrection. There will also be those who will be engaged in spiritual reformatïon. There will be those who will be engaged in Islamic education. There will be those striving for the sake of Islam. There will be those who will be inviting towards Islam. Each word in this verse is therefore a miracle and it is an example of the eloquence of the Qur'ân.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INJUNCTIONS AND DEMANDS

I am an ordinary student of the Qur'ân. The fact of the matter is that the centre, in fact, the fountain of all my thoughts, all my writings, all my speeches, all my expressions is my limited study of the Qur'ân.

Whatever inspiration Allâh ﷻ gave me to write and read, and the result of all my studying which I have laid before the readers – all this is the bestowal of the glorious Qur'ân.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

A perfect Muslim and complete Islam

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً ص وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ط إِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ.

"O believers! Enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, surely he is your open enemy." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 208)

This verse is a call to reflection

This is a very short verse of Sûrah al-Baqarah. However, this verse is an entire lesson and a call to reflection not only for life, but for the universe, for the diversity of life, and especially for the Muslim *ummah*.

Allâh ﷻ says: "O believers! Enter into السِّلم . I have checked the meaning of السِّلم in the reliable translations. I have checked from the translation of Shâh 'Abdul Qâdir Dehlawî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* to that of Maulânâ Ashrah 'Alî Thânwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, that of Maulânâ 'Abdul Mâjid Daryâbâdî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, that of Maulânâ Fath Muhammad Jâladharî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. They all translate the word السِّلم as "Islam". Shâh Sâhib *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* has translated this word as مسلمانی – submission. In other words, O believers! Enter into submission and Islam."

وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ

"and do not follow the footsteps of Satan."

There is the need to understand Islam

The first thing is that there is the need to understand Islam. Many people who have not made a comparative study and who do not know much about the history of religions may probably not know that Islam is the only religion of the world that has been named after a single principle, belief and school of

thought. All other religions (I am not saying founders of religions because religions do not have any founders) are named after the first proponents, after countries, or after classes and families. For example, Judaism is named after Judah who was a member of the prophetic family. Christianity is attributed to Christ. Then you get the Magaens. They are also known as Parisees. Faris (Iran) is the name of a country. It is not a belief system, it is not a way of life, it is not a divine call. Hinduisism – Hind is the name of a land and is attributed to it. Brahmanism is a class and is attributed to a specific family. Buddhism is attributed to Gautama Buddha. Similar is the case with Jainism.

The only religion which is attributed to a way of life, a belief system, to prophet-hood, to divine revelation, to the direct supervision of Allâh ﷻ, to His injunctions and Sharî'ah – is the religion of Islam. So Islam in its entirety revolves around a belief and a Sharî'ah. It thereby holds a very distinctive position.

Now something that is worth thinking about is that Allâh ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً.

"O believers! Enter into Islam and into submission completely."

Apparently, it will come to our minds that instead of في السلم Allâh ﷻ should have said في الإسلام . In other words, enter completely and totally into Islam. But no, we have been asked to enter into سِلْم . In other words, your relationship with Allâh ﷻ has to be one of submission, one of obedience and one of prudence. It must be a complete relationship. In your beliefs also, in your duties also, in your worship also, in your social life also, and in your way of life also – you have to be bound to the teachings of Allâh ﷻ and the injunctions as shown to you by the leader of all Messengers and the seal of all Prophets,

Muhammad ﷺ. You should be mindful of your relationships in the sense that they should not entail loyalty, obedience and submission to the enemies of Allâh ﷻ.

The word إسلام is derived from the word مسلم . In the Arabic language, the word Islam means: to hand over yourself, to surrender yourself, to withdraw yourself from all your things – your possessions, your desires, your benefits, from your perception of what is beneficial and what is harmful. You have placed yourself at the feet of Allâh's injunctions and surrendered yourself completely.

So Allâh ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً.

"O believers! Enter into Islam completely."

The demand of Allâh ﷻ is 100%. We have to ponder over this that we should enter into 100% Islam. The Muslim himself must be 100% Muslim, and his Islam should also be 100%. There should neither be any reluctance or reservation in the Muslims, nor should there be any reluctance, exception or reservation in their Islam. This is a point which you should take with you and which you should convey to others.

This is the demand of Allâh ﷻ and an explicit verse of the Qur'ân that 100% Muslims should enter into 100% Islam. They should not be like other religions which adopted the beliefs and abandoned everything else. They took the worship while they abandoned the laws of life, the way of life, the way of dealing with people, mutual rights and obligations, the injunctions of their Sharî'ah. Each religion took one portion. Some took two portions while others took three portions. But here the demand is that 100% Muslims should enter into 100% Islam. There should be no reluctance and reservation in the Muslims – whereby they bind themselves to 50% and practise on it while

they exclude themselves from the other 50%. Or that they leave out 75% and adopt the balance. The demand over here is that of 100% Islam. Even one percent should not be left out.

There is no exclusion, there is no concession and there is no special treatment for anyone. We have been provided with a guiding principle in order to take stock of our own selves. In fact, we have been given an instrument to measure ourselves. The first demand of Allâh ﷻ and the explicit order of the Qur'ân is that we have to enter into 100% Islam. The educated section of our community is not excluded, those of noble and high lineage are not excluded, even the rulers are not excluded. There is no exception for even the greatest ruler, the greatest king, the greatest leader, the greatest legislator, the greatest conqueror. There is no exception for anyone. No one can say that he does not have the time for salâh, therefore he is excused from offering salâh, or that so and so person is excused from performing hajj. If hajj has become incumbent on a person and he fulfils all its conditions, it is not permissible at all for him to leave it out.

In like manner, all Muslims are bound to the family law. All Muslims are bound to the injunctions of inheritance. This is something to awaken and arouse us. All injunctions fall within this.

The demand is not that you merely embrace Islam and enter Islam. Rather, the demand is that you enter 100% into Islam. You yourself must be 100% and your Islam must be 100%. There must be no reservation whatsoever in either [yourself or in your Islam].

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً.

O believers! Enter into Islam completely, enter into submission completely. This means, you must be 100% and your Islam must be 100%.

It is possible that a person may claim to be a Muslim. He may acknowledge his worship of Allâh ﷻ and may even establish a relationship of worship with Allâh ﷻ. He may have reservations regarding certain aspects and be influenced by his likes [and dislikes]. For example, he may say: "I accept the beliefs. The concept of *tauhîd* is certainly the truth. The belief in the hereafter is certainly the truth. The accounting of deeds is certainly the truth. However, in my social life, in my culture, in my family life, in my relations with my friends and family, in my debts, in my business, in my commercial transactions – I am free [to do as I will]." Allâh ﷻ is not prepared to accept this. It is for this reason that this verse is revealed. It is a strict admonition. It announces a very serious danger. That Allâh ﷻ is saying:

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً.

O you people who have embraced îmân! Enter into Islam, enter into submission. The word كَآفَّة is connected to both – those who enter, and the circle in which they are entering. Both should be complete. It should not happen that we go to the mosque but only put one foot into it. Or, we place both feet into it, but do not go inside. Or, we go inside but do not offer the salâh. ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً – enter completely and become practical [Muslims]. Become one who has entered, and who practises as well.

Do not follow the footsteps of Satan

وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ

"and do not follow the footsteps of Satan."

The words "footsteps of Satan" are also very eloquent. If you do not do this [if you do not enter into Islam completely], you would be following the footsteps of Satan. Allâh ﷻ could have confined Himself to saying "Enter into Islam completely".

However, He also mentioned the parallel of this – "and do not follow the footsteps of Satan".

Today we see with our own eyes that the footsteps of Satan are followed. The taking away of houses, the seizing of inheritance, involving oneself in interest-based transactions, remaining awake all night in marriage ceremonies, harming one's health in this way – all this is done for fame and glory. People may say: "The marriage party went to his place. There were 200 cars there. Such a large marriage party was accommodated in a five star hotel. A special invitation was sent to me. It stated that I would be accommodated in a five star hotel." All these things are now included in عُـرْف. This is a very eloquent Arabic word. It translates as custom, ritual, tradition, fundamentals of life.

So Allâh ﷻ says:

وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ.

"and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, surely he is your open enemy."

Look, the word "footsteps" is used and not the singular form "footstep". This shows that Satan has many footsteps. This shows expansiveness – it would include matters relating to belief, matters relating to action, matters relating to morals, matters relating to culture, matters relating to politics – all are included in this.

We should try and embed this verse into our hearts.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً ۪ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ.

"O believers! Enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, surely he is your open enemy." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 208)

Those who have a taste of the Arabic language will perceive the power and eloquence that is in these words. This is a manifest miracle of the Qur'ân. It also includes the might of Allâh ﷻ. If I, as a student of Arabic, were to say that the tone of these

words shows that if we were to understand this in another way, we could say: that if you do not do this, then fear the wrath of Allâh ﷻ, fear lack of blessings from Allâh ﷻ, fear evil consequences from Allâh ﷻ.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً ۪ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ.

"O believers! Enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, surely he is your open enemy." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 208)

Can there be anything clearer and more manifest than this?

The need to change one's conduct and character

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

"Say: O my Sustainer! Make me enter in a true manner and make me leave in a true manner." (Sûrah al-Isrâ', verse 80)

The basis is that of conduct, character, and that way of life that would not only open the doors of kingship but something greater than that, viz. the recognition of Allâh ﷻ, acceptance in the sight of Allâh ﷻ, the effect of one's insight, general good, guidance and divine mercy. Kingship is just an insignificant and tasteless example of it. Islamic character is something which bestows a person with the ability to conquer horizons and souls. It bestows one with a universality before which kingdoms are absolutely worthless. The basis and fountainhead of everything is character. On one occasion I had said: "Determination and motivation give birth to organizations and institutes. But organizations and institutes do not give birth to determination and motivation." One must have the correct motivation. When the motivation is correct, thousands of institutes come into existence. Institutes live and die. They come into existence and they perish. However, when human will and determination become correct, when human intention becomes correct, when the character of man is moulded in the mould of the Sharî'ah, when man's actions and activities become subservient to the will of Allâh ﷻ, when they are moulded in the mould of the will of Allâh ﷻ, when the direction of the mind becomes set on a right course, that a cry emanates from every call.

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيْرًا.

"Say: O my Sustainer! Make me enter in a true manner and make me leave in a true manner: and bestow upon me, from You, a helpful authority."

When this happens, the crowns of Khusroes and Caesar are placed at the feet of His servants.

Iqbâl says that the *ummah* of Rasûlullâh ﷺ came onto the throne of Khusroes and slept away there. In other words, it considered the throne of Khusroes to be an ordinary couch and bed. It did not give any regard to it. It slept away at the place where it was supposed to sit in order to display its authority and power.

So what is the actual thing? When Allâh ﷻ wills and when His wisdom demands it, kingdom will come into existence. When His wisdom demands something else, some greater things will come into existence. These poor saints and sages are relaxing in His land. They have ruled over kings. Go and read about Khwâjah Burhânuddîn Gharîb and Khwâjah Zaynuddîn. There is an incident when Khwâjah Zayn ad-Dîn was summoned by the king of his time. This was the greatest king of that time. Khwâjah Zaynuddîn became angry over something so he went to the grave of Khwâjah Burhânuddîn Gharîb and poked his staff into the grave. He then said: "Whoever has the guts and courage to come and take it out from here should try doing it and then see what happens to him." Eventually the king came and submitted before him and he did not submit before the king. Our entire history is filled with such incidents.

So what is the actual thing? It is to develop character. This falls under أدخلني – that when I enter, it must be in accordance with Your command. When I leave, it must be in accordance with Your teaching and Your will. This is expressed in the words مدخل صدق and مخرج صدق . Thereafter, the words are:

وَّاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيْرًا

"and bestow upon me, from You, a helpful authority."

There is no being apart from You that can help me. Give me strength from Your side. The actual strength and power of the Muslims lies in this. Whose kingdom and rule has remained forever? If there was any rule that would have remained forever it would have been that of the *Khulafâ' Râshidûn*. After them, if there was any kingdom to remain, it would have been that of the Abbasids who ruled over Africa and the huge lands of Asia. This very kingdom of the Moguls was such a huge kingdom. When this bounty of Allâh ﷻ is given to anyone, maximum benefit should be derived from it. I am not belittling this [kingdom and authority]. However, the life and death of Muslims does not revolve around it. It does not mean that when this kingdom comes to an end, the Muslims are dead. That when they receive this kingdom, they have come to life. The Muslim *ummah* is above and beyond kingship. Kingship is not above the *ummah*. Kingship is for the *ummah*. The *ummah* is not for kingship. Character builds kingship and even greater than kingship. That character is in itself liked by Allâh ﷻ. As a reward for it, He can even give this entire world. He can even give sovereignty over this entire world. And He gave it in the past. He gave it to Sulaymân ﷺ and to other beloved servants of His.

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

My walking, my moving about, my getting up, my sitting down, my living – should all be for You. We can also say this in the words of the Qur'ân as taught to Rasûlullâh ﷺ:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِيْ وَنُسُكِيْ وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِيْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ ج وَبِذٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ.

"Say: My salâh and my sacrifice, and my living and my dying are for Allâh alone, who is the Sustainer of the worlds. He has no partner. To this I have been commanded and I am the foremost to surrender." (Sûrah al-An'âm, verse 162)

The life of a Muslim should be moulded in the mould of the Sharî'ah, in the mould of the Qur'ân and Sunnah, in the mould of the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He should not go according to his will, he should not leave according to his will, he should not get up according to his will, he should not sit according to his will, he should not rule according to his will, he should not accept a ruling according to his will, he should not subject someone according to his will nor should he subject himself before someone according to his will. This is the meaning of

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For everything that we do, we should have proof from the Sharî'ah. What does Allâh ﷻ want from us? What is His ruling at this time? What is His order at this time? At the moment, the order of Allâh ﷻ is that we submit before Him. At the moment, the order of Allâh ﷻ is that we stop. The poet Hâlî, says the following words in praise of the Sahâbah ﷺ:

"Their fire did not blaze of its own accord. Their reins were in the hands of the Sharî'ah. Whenever it was loosened, they became loose. Whenever it was pulled back, they pulled back."

As a student of history, old memories vex me and taunt my heart. This is something else. But the Qur'ân is the eternal Book of Allâh ﷻ. It is a spoken decision of Allâh ﷻ. The actual thing is therefore to develop one's Islamic character. In other words, to submit the desires of your soul, your personal benefits, and your temporary demands to that of the Sharî'ah and to make them subservient to it. False honour, false name and fame, honour among contemporaries – all this is nothing. The actual thing is the order of Allâh ﷻ. And what is the order of Allâh ﷻ? It is to search for the type of life that He wants from us. What is the benefit to Islam at present? The criterion and barometer today is that what will we receive? Today, the entire political and economical enterprise is that what will we receive? Of what benefit will it be to us?

There is no being apart from You that can help me. Give me strength from Your side. The actual strength and power of the Muslims lies in this. Whose kingdom and rule has remained forever? If there was any rule that would have remained forever it would have been that of the *Khulafâ' Râshidûn*. After them, if there was any kingdom to remain, it would have been that of the Abbasids who ruled over Africa and the huge lands of Asia. This very kingdom of the Moguls was such a huge kingdom. When this bounty of Allâh ﷻ is given to anyone, maximum benefit should be derived from it. I am not belittling this [kingdom and authority]. However, the life and death of Muslims does not revolve around it. It does not mean that when this kingdom comes to an end, the Muslims are dead. That when they receive this kingdom, they have come to life. The Muslim *ummah* is above and beyond kingship. Kingship is not above the *ummah*. Kingship is for the *ummah*. The *ummah* is not for kingship. Character builds kingship and even greater than kingship. That character is in itself liked by Allâh ﷻ. As a reward for it, He can even give this entire world. He can even give sovereignty over this entire world. And He gave it in the past. He gave it to Sulaymân ﷺ and to other beloved servants of His.

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There is a deficiency in Islamic character

Today, Muslims are found throughout the world. Is there any country where your people are not found? But the question arises, for what are they there? They are not there to spread Islam. They are not there out of kindness to their fellow humans. You will find them in England, you will find them in Canada, you will find them in America, you will find them in the Arab countries. Seeing the present volatile situation in the Arab lands, they are not at ease. All these people in these different countries have left their homeland. This is not "make me leave in a true manner". Those who have entered those countries, it is not "make me enter in a true manner". It was economical and financial gain that took them out of here. It was economical and financial gain that caused them to enter those countries. It is economical, personal and family gains that kept them there. When they feel that instead of going to Mecca, they have to go to New York, they will do so. You can go and check this out for yourself. And when they feel that they now have to leave New York and go to Mecca, they will do so. They will not do so because the Ka'bah is there. Rather, because of some economical gain. They are neither acting on "make me enter in a true manner" nor on "make me leave in a true manner".

This is an order of Allâh ﷻ. This is taught to His Prophet ﷺ. Through him, the *ummah* is taught that they should make this supplication:

رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

Our living, our dying, our pleasure with someone, our displeasure at someone, our severing of ties, our maintaining of ties, our making and our breaking – should all be subservient to the order and command of Allâh ﷻ. Then see what Allâh ﷻ will bestow you with.

The complaint is that our character and conduct has changed. Our minds have changed. The Sharî'ah is no longer our imâm.

The Sharî'ah no longer decides between us. It is no longer considered to be a judge in our matters. We have not made the Sharî'ah our judge – we have made our desires and personal benefits our judge. The actual revolution that is necessary for the Muslims at present is that to choose proper character and conduct. Our lives should be in accordance with the will of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. That we carry out whatever they command, and we leave whatever they ask us to leave.

This is the meaning of

رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

A Muslim should first ask as to what the order of the Sharî'ah is. Is this act permissible for us or not?

At present, the deficiency that is found in us, the thing that is absolute, the thing that can cause a revolution – is that we should adopt Islamic character. If this is done on a collective basis, well and good. Praise be to Allâh, that collective efforts in this regard are made. However, make an individual effort as well and see the results that you will reap.

Each person should make a firm resolution that he will place the Sharî'ah before everything else. That he will inquire about the order of the Sharî'ah and what it demands. Irrespective of the nature of the matter, whether it be politics and elections, or whether it be weddings, circumcision, *'aqîqah*, building a house, distribution of inheritance, eating and drinking – in everything we have to see whether the Sharî'ah gives permission or not. We have to ask as to what the order of the Sharî'ah is.

It is therefore necessary that we change our character. We cannot progress without this. When Allâh ﷻ says this to his beloved Messenger ﷺ, when He teaches him to make this supplication and to read it again and again, then who are we to abstain. The supplication is:

رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

"O my Sustainer! Make me enter in a true manner and make me leave in a true manner."

The essential strength and value of the Muslims lies in îmân and character

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ

"O believers! If you co piate you of your sins and forgive y

Hadhrat conference LONDON: 17/10/10
Hadhrat's bayaan about Taqwa - Read this page to page 268 and make own Taqwa bayaan

The two positions o

There are two posi of human beings in general. T procedure by which all humar too have come into this worl ure. They have come with th body, the same physical requ esses, the same physical illn ans. The law of nature app h the age of youth after infa l become old. After reachin the limit of that age [if Allâh ﷻ wills it so]. Irrespective of how ardent a worshipper a Muslim was, irrespective of how much he feared Allâh, irrespective of how great an *'âlim*, writer, thinker, philosopher, intellectual, sûfî shaykh, producer of miracles, etc. he was, he will have to leave this world. Allâh ﷻ explicitly said:

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ

"You are sure to die, and they are sure to die as well."

How, then, can Muslims be excluded from this?!

However, the Muslims also hold another position. If they are able to establish this position within themselves, they become something else while still maintaining their position as humans.

رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

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"O believers! If you continue fearing Allâh, He shall decree for you a decision and expiate you of your sins and forgive you. The bounty of Allâh is great." (Sûrah al-Anfâl, verse 29)

The two positions of Muslims

There are two positions of Muslims. One is that of human beings in general. The Allâh-promulgated law and procedure by which all humans come into this world, Muslims too have come into this world according to that law and procedure. They have come with the same human body parts, the same body, the same physical requirements, the same physical weaknesses, the same physical illnesses which are found in other humans. The law of nature applies to them as well. They will reach the age of youth after infancy. After the age of youth, they will become old. After reaching a natural age, they will also reach the limit of that age [if Allâh ﷻ wills it so]. Irrespective of how ardent a worshipper a Muslim was, irrespective of how much he feared Allâh, irrespective of how great an *'âlim*, writer, thinker, philosopher, intellectual, sûfî shaykh, producer of miracles, etc. he was, he will have to leave this world. Allâh ﷻ explicitly said:

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ

"You are sure to die, and they are sure to die as well."

How, then, can Muslims be excluded from this?!

However, the Muslims also hold another position. If they are able to establish this position within themselves, they become something else while still maintaining their position as humans.

Their affair is then connected directly to Allâh ﷻ. They then come under the direct destiny of Allâh ﷻ. The law of Allâh ﷻ that is existent for thousands of years is now occasionally cancelled in their favour. At times, it is deferred. Allâh ﷻ gives them victory. He gives them honour. He bestows them with conquests. He bestows them with esteem and recognition. He makes them conquerors. He helps them.

This position of theirs is supplementary and additional. In other words, there is the need for some decision or addition. No one comes with it when he comes into this world. When he comes from the womb of his mother, from the place where he brought his body parts. In like manner, he has also brought adherence to îmân and the Sharî'ah. There is no need for any will or decision for it. This is part and parcel of the body. Now there is no need for him to do anything. This is also an inherited thing. This is also something that he has from birth. All this is not the case [i.e. he did not come with this îmân and Sharî'ah into this world]..

Islam, the religion of Allâh ﷻ, îmân, piety – are all supplementary and additional matters. They are connected to one's will. They are added to a person.

The value of a torch lies in its batteries

Let me give you a simple example. Take a torch. It has batteries in it. The batteries are good and the other materials that are necessary for it to work are found in it. There is another torch which is empty. There is a world of difference between the two torches. The one that is working will be called a torch. It will provide light in the darkness. A bright beam of light will emanate from it. If it is held in the hand, a person will not stumble, he will be saved from knocking into a wall, he will be saved from trampling on a sleeping child, he will know that he has a powerful instrument in his hands.

أَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِيْ بِهٖ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا.

"Can he who was dead and whom We gave life thereafter, and gave him a light whereby he walks among people – can he be equal to the one whose condition is that he is lying in the pits of darkness from which he cannot emerge?" (Sûrah al-An'âm, verse 122)

Allâh ﷻ is explaining to us in this verse just as we teach spelling to someone, or we teach someone that two plus two equals four. That person "who was dead and whom We gave life thereafter", not only that, We "gave him a light whereby he walks among people – can he be equal to the one whose condition is that he is lying in the pits of darkness from which he cannot emerge?"

The entire matter lies in the batteries and materials of the torch. These materials are obtained from Rasûlullâh ﷺ. There is only one place for obtaining them. After the commissioning of Rasûlullâh ﷺ as a Prophet, these batteries cannot be obtained from anywhere else – not from America, not from Russia, and not from any other factory in the world. Those batteries of îmân have been brought by Rasûlullâh ﷺ. If you place those batteries into the torch, fit them properly, press the switch, and point it around, you will see a strong beam of light emanating from it. You yourself will be able to see the way, and others will also be able to see the way. This is the essential value of this îmân. This is the lofty status of Islam. That when those batteries are placed in the torch, it will not only light the way for that traveler in whose hands the torch is and who is its owner. Rather, it will show the way to numerous other people. They will also be able to see the way. This is the lofty status of the Muslims.

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

O believers! If you fear Allâh, if you feel shame before Him, if you are conscious of Him, if you respect His injunctions, if you

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O believers! If you fear Allâh, if you feel shame before Him, if you are conscious of Him, if you respect His injunctions, if you

accept His Sharî'ah, if you resolve to act on His Sharî'ah, if you start practising on it – He will pass a decision in your favour. In other words, He will bestow you a distinguished and exalted position.

Allâh ﷻ says يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا – He will bestow you with a distinguishing feature. Your status will be truly raised. You will come out of this baseness and the corruptness of this environment. When a person deprives himself of the light of Allâh ﷻ, what happens to him? He becomes like that torch whose batteries are dead or which had no batteries at all.

The actual strength of the Muslims

The actual distinctiveness of us Muslims, our distinguishing feature, our capital, our pride and our strength lies in those batteries which we obtained from Rasûlullâh ﷺ and which were placed in the hearts and minds of humanity. The batteries were placed in the minds and in the hearts as well. Îmân has some connection with the heart and emotions, and it also has some connection with the mind and thought processes. It is from this that a special type of character comes into existence. A special way of life comes into existence. A special behaviour in life comes into existence. A special manner of conducting oneself comes into existence. One begins to recognize Allâh ﷻ. One begins to love the creation of Allâh ﷻ. One begins to fear Allâh ﷻ. The person begins feeling shame before his fellow humans. He develops the fear and love of Allâh ﷻ. He worries about the well-being of his fellow humans. He shows mercy to the poor. He saves himself from faithlessness. He seeks refuge from stealing. He is abhorred with crimes and oppression. His entire character changes. What has worked all these wonders? It is those batteries.

Spiritual suicide

If the Muslims deprive themselves of these batteries, this would be a spiritual suicide. Like when a person consumes poison and dies, or a person strangles himself. So the person may be a Muslim but those batteries of îmân are not inside him. The batteries of the Islamic creed are not inside him. He does not have that فرقان which Allâh ﷻ spoke of:

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا.

"O believers! If you continue fearing Allâh, He shall decree for you a decision"

O believers! If you begin fearing Allâh ﷻ and live a life of caution. If you practise on the teachings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. If you walk this way and not that way. If you tread this path and not that path. If you do not leave this line [of Islam]. If you do not go beyond this limit. All this is the meaning of *taqwâ* – piety, righteousness, virtue. Many people understand *taqwâ* to mean this: a person offers salâh profusely – so much so that he does not even close an eye-lid for the entire night. *Taqwâ* means to abstain from those things which Allâh ﷻ and Rasûlullâh ﷺ prohibited us. Even if we were to think about those prohibited things, we must be able to seek refuge in Allâh ﷻ. And that we adhere to those things which they commanded us to do.

If the Muslims were to receive the kingdom of the entire world, if the crowns of the kings are placed at their feet, if the treasures of Qârûn are given to them – but they do not have those batteries, they do not have that light which Rasûlullâh ﷺ came with, they do not have that criterion which Allâh ﷻ bestows upon those who follow His religion – then all that they have received is worthless.

The matter is extremely clear and obvious. Our entire strength, our entire distinctiveness, the position and status that we have in the sight of Allâh ﷻ, the weight and strength which we have in the sight of the creation – all this is from those batteries. If

accept His Sharî'ah, if you resolve to act on His Sharî'ah, if you start practising on it – He will pass a decision in your favour. In other words, He will bestow you a distinguished and exalted position.

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those batteries are in order, everything else will be in order. If this heart is in order, everything else will be in order. If this mind is in order, everything else will be in order. Our belief system will be in order, our character will be in order. When Muslims become true Muslims, neither can mountains nor oceans come in their way.

The miracle of îmân and character

The fact is that all this is the miracle of these batteries and the materials that are filled into it – the material of îmân, the material of belief, the material of morals, the material of objectives. Our îmân has to be unique, our belief has to be unique, our morals have to be unique. If this is the case, then what will happen?

يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

Allâh ﷻ will bestow you with such a distinguishing feature, that you will be recognized from a great distance. You will be honoured wherever you go.

So Allâh ﷻ says: O believers! إن تتقوا الله – if you follow a life of *taqwâ* and if your mind is made. One is to do something after taking up the courage to do so or after having the will to do so. Another is for your mind to be made up. When you are moulded, when you have been moulded in the mould of the Sharî'ah – then *taqwâ* will become your hallmark. You will develop a special consciousness of Islam and Allâh ﷻ within you. يجعل لكم فرقانا – Allâh ﷻ will then bestow you with a distinctiveness. You will be recognized from a distance. You will be honoured wherever you go.

نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ

Light moves in front of them. They are behind while their light moves in front of them. This light is announcing the glad tiding that an accepted servant of Allâh ﷻ is coming.

So this verse is very important (all verses are important). This is also an announcement. It is also a glad tiding. It is also a guarantee. It is also a prize.

The announcement is that Allâh ﷻ who is the creator of the entire universe is making an announcement: O believers! If you follow a life of *taqwâ*, Allâh ﷻ shall bestow you with a فرقان .

What is the meaning of فرقان ?

الفارق بين الحق والباطل، الفارق بين النور والظلام، الفارق بين الخير والشر

That which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, good and evil.

يجعل لكم فرقانا : Allâh ﷻ will bestow you with such a strength, with such a distinguishing status that you will be totally distinguished and distinct. This is similar to diamonds being scattered among rocks. They will appear absolutely clear and a person will be able to pick them up easily. There will be no need to show him the difference between diamonds and rocks. You will also become like this. Like diamonds among rocks. Like roses among thorns. Like light in the midst of darkness. If it suddenly becomes dark and the light is switched on, the entire assembly is brought to light. Allâh ﷻ will give you this light – يجعل لكم فرقانا .

The Muslims had received this فرقان – they received it by virtue of a life of *taqwâ*. As the poet Hâlî said:

"Their fire did not blaze of its own accord. Their reins were in the hands of the Sharî'ah. Whenever it was loosened, they became loose. Whenever it was pulled back, they pulled back."

He whom Allâh ﷻ personally supervises

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ

This is a very short verse of the Qur'ân which comprises of just a few words. Allâh ﷻ says: Surely it is We who sent down الذِّكْر , and it is We who are certainly going to safeguard it.

A great announcement

This is a verse of the Qur'ân. But it is a very great good tiding, a very great glad tiding, a very big guarantee, a very great announcement. The ears of the entire world should open to it. Everyone should turn their attention towards this announcement. There is a generalness in this announcement, there is an emphasis in it, there is a conviction in it. Especially for the Muslims – it requires special attention from them.

Allâh ﷻ says: Surely it is We who sent down الذِّكْر . As far as I know and from what I have studied, all the commentators of the Qur'ân unanimously state that the word الذِّكْر in this verse refers to the Qur'ân. "Surely it is We who sent down the Qur'ân." Allâh ﷻ uses the plural form, the royal "we": "It is We who sent it down and it is We who shall safeguard it."

Those who know Arabic know very well that this theme could have been expressed in several ways, e.g. We are its protectors, We shall protect it, etc. There are various ways of expressing this. However, the way that the Qur'ân uses is totally different. It has been said with much emphasis. It has been said with great force. "We are certainly its protectors."

As an ordinary student of the Arabic language, I can say that Allâh ﷻ brought together several forms of emphasis in this verse: the word لحافظون is an active noun. The word إنا has been

brought at the beginning. Thereafter the word له is placed before the word لحافظون. Instead of saying إنا لحافظون , Allâh ﷻ says إنا له لحافظون . All this is related to the science of eloquence and grammar – *balâghah* and *nahw*.

This verse is most worthy of reflection

The words of this verse are very few. We may have recited this verse thousands of times and heard it from the *'ulamâ'* on numerous occasions. The fact of the matter is that even I cannot claim that I have full knowledge of all its meanings, all its horizons where it reaches, all the limits that it has encompassed, or the expansiveness that is found in it. However, this verse is most worthy of pondering over, of reflecting over.

First of all, Allâh ﷻ says that He sent down this Qur'ân and that it is His responsibility to safeguard it. As for the Taurâh and Injîl, the Qur'ân says:

بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ

"This is because they were held custodians over the Book of Allâh and were appointed as guardians over it." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 44)

Allâh ﷻ did not take the responsibility of safeguarding the Taurâh and the Injîl. They were handed over to the peoples to whom they were revealed. What was the result of this? Look into history and what the writers and researchers (especially of today) have to say. They have clearly proven that these books did not remain safeguarded and protected. All this is the result of Allâh ﷻ handing over this responsibility to them – بما استحفظوا من كتاب الله . However, the present verse under our discussion says the complete opposite:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ

"Surely it is We who sent down the Qur'ân and it is We who shall safeguard it."

For now, I do not wish to say anything about the Qur'ân being protected and safeguarded. My mind goes to this idea that in this promise to safeguard the Qur'ân, how many other promises are included and incorporated? Ponder over this. And what a great glad tiding there is in this for us. This is the actual honour of our *madâris*. This is their actual value and merit.

What is the basis and status of our *madâris*? What is their actual value and worth? This matter is confined to your understanding that while speaking about the protection of the Qur'ân and announcing the safeguarding of the Qur'ân, how many other protections have been announced? And what is the true way of protection in this world?

The true way of protection

We can learn the true way of protection from this verse: It is We who sent down الذِّكْر , and it is We who are its protectors.

When Allâh ﷻ says "We are the protectors of this Book", do you think that it means that this Book will be a mere adornment for some library? Even a child will not think this.

The vociferous and determined manner, the splendorous manner, the bustling manner, with a vibrating sound – not with the majesty of sovereigns, not with the majesty of kings, not even with the majesty of Khusroes – but with the majesty and grandeur of Allâh ﷻ this announcement is made:

وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ

It is We alone who shall protect it. It is We alone who are responsible for its protection. We have taken the responsibility for its protection. We have borne the weight of its protection. So do you think that the eminent manner in which this announcement was made – that this announcement merely means that this book will remain protected in some library where someone could read it whenever he wills? Or that it will

merely remain protected in the hearts of people? That they will memorize it exactly as it was revealed and that they will recite it in the *tarâwîḥ ṣalâh*? No!

The words إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ have numerous announcements within them. In this is an announcement that We will safeguard this Book, We will keep the meanings that it contains alive, We will keep the system of practising on it alive, We will also protect those who protect this Book, We will also honour those who memorize this Book, We will also maintain the system of those who acquire knowledge of this Book, We will also protect this language in which this Book is revealed, We will also maintain those sciences and branches of knowledge that are necessary to learn this language, We will also protect those places and that country as well to which this language belongs.

I am explicitly stating that the explanation of the words إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ also includes that as long as Allâh ﷻ wills to maintain Islam and the Qur'ân, this Arabic language will remain in that very Qur'ânic grammar and morphology, in those very Qur'ânic rules, and in that very Qur'ânic language. إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ also includes: the Qur'ân will remain protected and the grammar and morphology of the Qur'ânic language will also remain protected. This verse contains the greatest guarantee of protection of those lands in which this language is spoken. This guarantee [of protection of these lands] is not contained in the charter of the United Nations. It cannot be found in any speech of President Carter [U.S. president at that time]. It cannot be found in any speech of any Russian leader. It is only found in the words إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ .

A true Muslim can never be wiped out

I am going one step further and stating that the Muslims of different countries are also protected in the same way. The

protection of Allâh ﷻ is with us. The guarantee of protection is with us. This will happen when we keep Qur'ânic sciences and Qur'ânic teachings close to our hearts, when we spread and propagate them, when we serve them, when we teach them, when we give due importance to their teaching and studying. Today, the greatest guarantee of us Muslims of India is this verse. Because Allâh ﷻ says إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ – We are certainly its protectors. If We are its protectors, We are also the protectors of those who bear this Qur'ân. It is impossible for there to be the *adhân* while there is no *mu'adhdhin*.

Allâh ﷻ says: We revealed الذِّكْر and We take the responsibility of its protection and We will continue protecting it. Even if the entire world goes on one side, against Him, nothing can happen:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنَ

When Allâh ﷻ wills something, He merely says "Be!" and it becomes.

The secret behind our protection

The words وإنا له لحافظون contain all forms of protection and all guarantees. Those who include themselves in this chain are therefore extremely blessed, those who seat themselves onto this ship of Nûh ﷺ are extremely blessed. I am referring to it as the ship of Nûh ﷺ. Remember when Nûh ﷺ said:

لاَ عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللهِ إِلاَّ مَنْ رَّحِمَ

"There is no saviour today from the command of Allâh except him upon whom He has mercy."
(Sûrah Hûd, verse 43)

There was only one place wherein a person could save himself from the flood that engulfed the world in the time of Nûh ﷺ. Even at present, if there is any place that can save a person -

when a flood is engulfing the world, the flood of materialism is engulfing the world, the flood of worship of desires and lusts is engulfing the world, the flood of strength and power is engulfing the world – all these will drown. At present, there is no place of refuge. At that time there was the ship of Nûh ﷺ. At present, there is the ship of Muhammad ﷺ, the ship of Islam, the ship of the Qur'ân. The person who gets a place on this ship, who makes a place for himself on this ship – he will be saved. There is no place of refuge and protection for the Muslims in this world. If there is any place, it is only in the shade of the Qur'ân under which we have to go, whose protection Allâh ﷻ promised. Whoever comes under its shade, he will be protected. The secret behind our protection and the secret behind our security is in the continued existence of the Qur'ân. In the continued existence of the teachings of the Qur'ân. In practising on its teachings. It is our duty to protect it and spread its word. This is the guarantee from Allâh ﷻ:

وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُوْنَ

"We alone are its protectors."

The need to respect the pious predecessors and to acknowledge their services

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاءُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالإِيْمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

"Those who came after them say: 'O our Sustainer! Forgive us and our brothers who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. O our Sustainer! You are certainly most kind, most merciful.'" (Sûrah al-Hashr, verse 10)

In the above verse, the forthcoming generations of Muslims are asked to have good thoughts about and to acknowledge their previous generations. The truthfulness, devotion, obedience to Allâh ﷻ, fear and turning to Allâh, services to Dîn and protection of the borders and forts of Islam in which they were at the forefront should be acknowledged from the heart by the latter generations. The new generations should bear no malice or hatred towards them. They should experience no hesitance or problem in acknowledging their services. Their tongues should always make *du'â'* for them and always sing their praises. They should accept their shortcomings and constraints. And they should overlook their omissions - omissions from which no human is free.

The reason for all this is that the person who engages in *ijtihâd* can err and can also be correct. The fear of falling down is only possible in favour of the one who tries to walk and run. Apart from this, it is an accepted reality that apart from the teachings and guidance of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the rules and teachings of all other people can be accepted or rejected.

A very important necessity of *da'wah* and *tablîgh*, the personality of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and in order to prove the greatness of his life, it is extremely necessary to acknowledge the great contribution of the Sahâbah ﷺ. We should make manifest the greatness and importance of their feats, their loyalty [to Rasûlullâh ﷺ], and their mutual love and cooperation in the path of truth. We should

present the luminous pages of this glowing history to the world. Their mistakes and human shortcomings do not even amount to a small black spot on the clear and pure pages of history. Rational philosophy and a sound mind also accept this stand. This is also established from the Qur'ân and reliable Traditions. Even the Qur'ân considers such a stand concerning the pious predecessors to be worthy of praise. Allâh says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاءُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالإِيْمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

"Those who came after them say: 'O our Sustainer! Forgive us and our brothers who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. O our Sustainer! You are certainly most kind, most merciful.'" (Sûrah al-Hashr, verse 10)

This verse demands of us to be extremely cautious when deciding to pass any judgement or having any opinion about the pious predecessors, righteous imams and leaders. This verse also asks us not to display any haste or impulsive emotions concerning them. As long as we are not fully satisfied concerning a particular matter, we should abstain from passing any definite judgement concerning it.

At times a person adopts this way of thinking that if someone did not endeavour to establish an Islamic state, then it is as if he has done nothing - irrespective of whether he is Shaykh 'Abdul Qâdir Jaylânî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Mujaddid Alf Thânî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* or Shâh Walî Allâh *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. This is actually a result of an "on the surface" study of history. [On the contrary], everyone has made a contribution: the scholars of Hadîth, the jurists, the reformers of the *ummah*, the *auliyâ'* of Allâh - all of them have made a contribution.

If someone says: "What did Imâm Abû Hanîfah do? [He did nothing]. He merely taught the rules of salâh and fasting. He ought to have established an Islamic caliphate and an Islamic state." You should remember that a caliphate will be established

[whether you like it or not]. But who will teach you how to offer your ṣalâh? And what benefit is there in a caliphate when no one knows how to offer ṣalâh?

This misconception should never enter your heart that all the past scholars were defective. That none of them understood Islam. That none of them tried to establish Islam in its totality. You should bear in mind that all scholars of the past were engaged in the service and protection of Islam in accordance with their capability [and the means available to them]. Some were engaged in admonition, some in delivering lectures, some were teaching Ḥadîth, some were issuing fatwâs, some were writing books. They were all serving Islam and guiding the Muslims in their respective fields. Each of them was safeguarding a particular front [of Islam].

Never ever be under this misconception that some people have correctly understood Islam only now and that no one understood Islam completely before this. This is a great accusation against Islam. It is a huge taint against the capability of Islam. This would cause doubts on the Qur'ânic life, the clarity of the Qur'ân and its being clearly understood as established from verses like "a Book in a clear Arabic language" and "a clear Arabic tongue".

Moreover, if someone claims that the Qur'ân was not correctly understood for the last 1400 years, can we believe that it has been understood now? The fundamental principles of Islam, the facts of the Qur'ân and the absolute truths of *Dîn* have been coming down to us through an uninterrupted chain. If someone feels that these things were not understood for quite some time, then this is his short-sightedness. He will not be able to prove even a single thing to be completely forgotten [or abandoned] by the world of Islam. Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* has went to the extent in stating that there isn't even a single *Sunnah* [of Rasûlullâh ﷺ] that has been completely raised [or that has completely disappeared] from the world of Islam. If it is not

found [practiced upon] in one corner of the Muslim world, it is certainly found in another part of the Muslim world.

You should therefore have good thoughts about our past scholars. In this there is great protection of your îmân. You should always make *du'â'* for them:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالإِيْمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

"O our Sustainer! Forgive us and our brothers who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. O our Sustainer! You are certainly most kind, most merciful." (Sûrah al-Ḥashr, verse 10)

[whether you like it or not]. But who will teach you how to offer your ṣalâh? And what benefit is there in a caliphate when no one knows how to offer ṣalâh?

This misconception should never enter your heart that all the past scholars were defective. That none of them understood Islam. That none of them tried to establish Islam in its totality. You should bear in mind that all scholars of the past were engaged in the service and protection of Islam in accordance with their capability [and the means available to them]. Some were engaged in admonition, some in delivering lectures, some were teaching Ḥadîth, some were issuing fatwâs, some were writing books. They were all serving Islam and guiding the Muslims in their respective fields. Each of them was safeguarding a particular front [of Islam].

Never ever be under this misconception that some people have correctly understood Islam only now and that no one understood Islam completely before this. This is a great accusation against Islam. It is a huge taint against the capability of Islam. This would cause doubts on the Qur'ânic life, the clarity of the Qur'ân and its being clearly understood as established from verses like "a Book in a clear Arabic language" and "a clear Arabic tongue".

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رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالإِيمَانِ وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُفٌ رَّحِيمٌ.

"O our Sustainer! Forgive us and our brothers who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. O our Sustainer! You are certainly most kind, most merciful." (Sûrah al-Ḥashr, verse 10)

Our life in the light of Sûrah al-'Aṣr

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

وَالْعَصْرِ. إِنَّ الإِنْسَانَ لَفِيْ خُسْرٍ. إِلاَّ الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ ۙ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ.

I commence in the name of Allâh who is extremely beneficent, most merciful.

"By the oath of time [in which profit and loss occurs]. Man is in great loss [due to wasting away his life]. Except those people who believed, and did good deeds [because these are excellent qualities], and continually recommended one another [in remaining steadfast] in [believing] the truth, and continually recommended one another in remaining steadfast [in carrying out good deeds]." (Sûrah al-'Aṣr, verses 1-3)

A very comprehensive chapter

This is a very short but very comprehensive chapter of the Qur'ân. From among the four great imâms of jurisprudence, Imâm Shâfi'î *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* is quoted to have said that if nothing from the entire Qur'ân was revealed, and just this Sûrah al-'Aṣr was revealed, it would have still been sufficient for the guidance of mankind. This chapter is a constitution not for the life of Muslims, but for human life. It is a constitution that has been sent down from the heavens. I have seen in a Tradition that when the Saḥâbah ﷺ used to meet each other and remain with each other for quite some time, they would recite this chapter before parting ways. This is because the Saḥâbah ﷺ considered this meeting to be beneficial. They had this belief that they will not be taken to task when any matter is concluded on a particular message, on something beneficial, on some call.

Time is a witness

This chapter commences with والعصر – in other words, time is a witness. This is because what is going to be said is connected to

time. The best witness for it can be time and history. This concerns man who was since before, is still present, and will continue to remain as long as Allâh ﷻ wills. No one can remain with time forever. Even with regard to the greatest of creations Allâh ﷻ said:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

"Every soul shall taste death."

Even with regard to Rasûlullâh ﷺ, who is the most beloved of Allâh ﷻ and who is the final Messenger, Allâh ﷻ said:

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَّإِنَّهُمْ مَّيِّتُوْنَ

"You are to die and they are certainly to die as well."

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلاَّ رَسُوْلٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِئِنْ مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ

"Muhammad is but a Messenger. Messengers before him passed away. If he were to die or is killed, will you turn back on your heels?"

There is no one who is going to live in this world forever. Can you find a witness like this who has always been seeing, who is still seeing and who will continue seeing? This witness is a witness to all incidents – incidents of those who were successful and also of those who were failures. It is also witness to the greatest conquerors and vanquishers, those in whose names oaths used to be taken, those whose bravery was proverbial – it is witness to all of them and also to those who were the greatest failures in this world. It has been looking at all levels of humanity and all groups of humans. Allâh ﷻ therefore commences with this العصر – time. Time is testimony and a witness.

An inspiring and rousing statement

Allâh ﷻ then says something that would inspire and rouse all those humans who have some perception. Something that

would bring the ears to attention. Something that would cause all humans to leave aside all their tasks and pay attention. Allâh ﷻ said something that is in the disposition of man. The desire to succeed. Whatever progress and whatever brilliance you see in the world – all the brave ones whom you see, all of them are indebted to this. The result of this is that the desire to succeed is inborn and placed in the disposition of man. This is a very strong force of this world. It is this that has given progress to civilization. It is this that has given progress to knowledge and craftsmanship. It is this that has given progress to philosophy. It is this that has given progress to *ma'rifah* – recognition of Allâh ﷻ. It is this that has awakened the [internal] spiritual powers. It is this that has spurred on man's internal strengths. If this desire to succeed was removed from the human psyche, man will become extinguished. Not only will man become extinguished, but this world which is so brilliant will become extinguished. The grandeur, the splendour and activity of this world are all as a result of man's desire to succeed. If man were to turn a cold shoulder to his desire to succeed, if this desire were to come out of his system, then nothing will happen in this world – man will not be able to move from his place, he will not go anywhere, he will not come anywhere, commercial activities will no longer exist, the efforts and endeavours to conquer will no longer remain.

At this point, Allâh ﷻ said such a thing, that even if it is said before sleeping people, they should all wake up. They should leave all their activities aside and turn their attention towards it. This is similar to a warning alarm that goes off. This is similar to a hard pinch that is given to a sleeping person and he suddenly gets up.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

"Man is in great loss."

There is nothing greater, there is no notice that can draw the attention of a person than this – that man is certainly to stay in loss. Allâh ﷻ uses the definite article – الإنسان – this refers to man of every era, every type of man, man of every level and section – is to remain in loss. There is no one excluded from this. This statement is such that it immediately draws your attention.

Two attributes are to be found

Thereafter Allâh ﷻ says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

Except those in whom two attributes are found. One is îmân – this is related to facts, this is related to mental acquisition. The other is "and did good deeds". This is related to the heart, the being, morals, actions. Apart from these two, all are to remain in loss.

You can understand this as follows: someone says that man deals in ice. He is a businessman who deals in ice. He is a stockist of ice. Ice is something that melts. If this ice is not sold quickly, it will melt. This ice of life, this life which we consider to be forever, is also something that melts away. If you do not sell it quickly and gather the wealth, then it is like water and will remain as such. If you open the ice shop in the morning and sit down there. If not you, then even if it is the biggest ice stockist in the city. If he remains sitting, if he remains sleeping, if he remains engaged in useless talks, if he spends his time walking about aimlessly – the ice is not going to wait for him. This ice will melt and become water. He would have thereby poured water over his entire effort and his entire capital. This is also the condition of man's life. If he did not obtain his price quickly, if he did not take benefit from this life quickly, if he did not take compensation from this life quickly, if he did not

make this life valuable quickly – then it is ice. It will melt. There is no way of causing it to remain longer.

Allâh ﷻ says that man is to remain in loss. Rather, those that are in most loss are those who are the biggest dealers in ice. And the most among them are those who do not ponder and reflect over the fact that the ice is doing what it is supposed to do [i.e. melt away]. The ice is acting according to its disposition. Just as ice melts away, life also goes away gradually. The breath that leaves the body actually shortens the extent of one's life. It limits the expansiveness of life. You continue breathing while you are asleep and when you are awake as well. So you are melting away the ice. If you did not hasten in enabling it to live longer, if you did not acquire its price, then there cannot be a more bankrupt and ruined trader than you.

Allâh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

All of mankind are traders in ice. All of them own ice. Their entire lives is ice. Their youth is ice. Their strength is ice. Their body parts are ice. They are all to answer like ice. They are all to remain cold – unable to answer. It is a colloquial mode of expression that we say that a person has become cold. His hands and feet have become cold. So and so person has become cold. This we use colloquially. However, the reality is also this – that man melts away. He is a liquid form that flows away. His is a liquid form that does not stay at one place. Intelligence therefore demands that he should acquire it as quickly as possible. That he should protect it as quickly as possible. If there is any bank for it, he should safeguard it there. He should acquire its price. If not, this life is fleeting.

The essential strength and value of life

If this is the state of man that he is something that is going to perish, that this life is going to come to an end, then what is the price of this life? This life has the qualities of ice – it has been created such by Allâh ﷻ. It is He who gave it this liquid form. Therefore, it is He alone who should tell us what the price of this life is. It is from Him that we can obtain its price. Irrespective of what a thing or an item may be, as long as we do not know its actual value, its actual worth and its actual price, then it has no benefit. For example, you are a dealer in diamonds and gemstones. You are sitting among people who know nothing about these items, who do not know the value and worth of these items. You will spend your entire life but no one from among them will purchase any of these stones from you. They will not purchase anything from you. We therefore have to ask, what is the actual value and worth of it?

So Allâh ﷻ informs us:

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

This is what We purchase [i.e. îmân and good deeds]. I [Allâh ﷻ] am giving you the example of this life as a business transaction. As a seller. These are the words of the Qur'ân:

إِنَّ اللهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ

Allâh ﷻ has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth in exchange for paradise, in return for paradise. He [Allâh ﷻ] is the buyer while we are the sellers. We are the traders of ice while He is the buyer. So it is He who will tell us that He will purchase it for such and such price, that this is His condition [of purchasing]. It is only then that the goods can be sold. If not, they cannot be sold.

So Allâh ﷻ says – îmân and good deeds. So it is îmân and good deeds that give value to this life. If not, this life is just like

water – it will flow away like water and be completely finished. Millions and billions of peoples lives have flowed away like water. They attained nothing. Great kings, great legislators, the intelligentsia, the literati, the poets, the inventors, the craftsmen, the conquerors – they all did not consider this life to be of any value, nor did they ask the creator [Allâh ﷻ] of this life as to how they could make this live valuable.

Come with îmân and good deeds

إِلاَّ الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

It is îmân and good deeds that can give value to this life. It is We who have created this life:

أَلاَ يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ

It is We who have created it. It is We who are informing you. Who else will be so kind as to tell you? It is the grace of Allâh ﷻ that this life belongs to Him and it is He who is informing us what its value and worth is. Look! This is the price of this world. Look! This is the value and worth of this world. That you should come to Us with îmân and good deeds. You may say to Me that you built this and you built that. That you have so many houses. That you have so many cars. That you have so many senior positions. All these things have no value in Our sight. It is îmân and good deeds that are of value to Us. It is Allâh's ﷻ grace and bounty that He gave us this life and also fixed its value and worth for us. If not, there are many such things which are going to waste. This is because their value was not established. No one knew and no one understood their value. There are many things which man makes. But he is unable to acquire them because people did not accept them, did not believe them.

Allâh ﷻ says:

إِلاَّ الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

If these two qualities and attributes are found, you will be saved from danger. You will be saved from loss. The individual will be saved but the society is still in danger. The individual who develops these two qualities within himself, he will be saved, he will gain salvation, he will triumph. However, the society is still in danger. Humanity is still in danger. How can this society be saved?

Society is in danger

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

It is the duty of the individual that together with îmân and good deeds, he should also urge others towards the truth. If he does not do this, that society will drown and this individual will also drown. That society in which the truth is not recommended to others – a person may be a very righteous person himself, he may of noble character, he may be an ardent worshipper, he may be a pious person – but he does not speak about all this to anyone, he does not command his own family members, he does not command his children, he does not order them to offer ṣalâh, he does not tell them that they too should abstain from evils, that they too should abstain from wrongdoing, that they too should abstain from corruption – then that society will rot. Immorality will spread in that society. That society will disappear and that individual will also disappear.

This individual had come out of danger to a certain extent. However, since the society is still depraved, this individual will not be able to save himself. Allâh ﷻ therefore says that this [îmân and good deeds] have to be passed on. This îmân and good deeds should not be found within you alone. This current will now have to come out from inside you. This light will have to spread from you. It has to go to society so that other

individuals of society may also tread your path. If they do not come onto your path, it will become difficult for you to remain on your path. It will become difficult for you to remain steadfast. This is because when a society becomes corrupt and immoral, when an environment becomes depraved, then even the most righteous of people begin gasping for breath. It becomes difficult for them to remain on their straight path. There comes a time that that society becomes so corrupt that it cannot tolerate that righteous individual. It is like covering a person's mouth, whereby he is unable to breathe and he gasps for breath.

In this way, that society becomes more corrupt and depraved. That righteous person does nothing about it. He does not guide it. He does not say anything to it. Rather, that society says to him:

أَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ

There was a society that had depraved to such an extent and dropped to such a level. Lût ﷺ could do nothing. He could say nothing to them. He had no power to do anything. He had even made this supplication – أو آوي إلى ركن شديد – if only I could take refuge in someone. This was the level of his weakness. Despite this weakness of his, the society could not bear him. They [people of his village] said – expel him from our village, he is too pure and chaste. So when a society becomes impure, it goes beyond its capacity to tolerate pure individuals.

Many of our fellow brothers come and complain to us, some of them are engaged in the work of *tablîgh*, others also come and complain to us and say: "We do not accept bribes. This is our crime. The offices and departments in which we work are not prepared to tolerate us. We are always restless just as when something gets into the eye, a person becomes restless. In like manner, the society cannot tolerate us. We say to them: "What

can we give to you when we ourselves do not take [any bribes]? You may take our share as well. We do not wish to have any share in that bribe. You take it. You can enjoy the full benefit of this bribe." They reply: "It is not a matter of benefit or loss. Rather, we cannot look at you." What is the reason for this? The reason is that Allâh ﷻ has placed within every person this restraint which rebukes him. This wakes up now and again. Therefore, they do not want anyone like this [righteous person] to come near them whereby their heart begins rebuking them. They therefore want this "pain" to stay far away from them.

Da'wah is also necessary

The Qur'ân has drawn our attention to the fact that îmân and good deeds are not enough. *Da'wah* is also necessary. This is because if this *da'wah* does not take place, this society will become so corrupt that you will not be able to remain steadfast on your îmân and good deeds. Therefore, together with this îmân and good deeds, you will have to recommend and urge each other towards this تَوَاصِي بِالْحَقِّ and تَوَاصِي بِالصَّبْرِ - recommending one another [in remaining steadfast] in [believing] the truth, and recommending one another in exercising patience [in carrying out good deeds]. When you sit together somewhere, speak of good deeds, speak of fearing Allâh ﷻ, invite towards Islam, invite towards adherence to the obligations of Islam, invite towards abstention from the prohibitions and unlawful matters. When you invite towards the truth, towards Islam, you will certainly experience some opposition. You will certainly have to make certain sacrifices. You will have to bear certain losses. You will have to exercise patience. Therefore, تواصي بالحق alone is not sufficient. You cannot confine yourself to recommending each other towards good. Rather, there is also the need to recommend and urge each other to exercise patience. You will have to explain to people: "This is not such an easy path. When you tread the straight path, you will

certainly get opposition. You will certainly have to bear losses. There is therefore the need to exercise patience." Why is all this happening? It is because this is a constitution of life. It is a perfect and continuous [coming down from generation to generation] constitution. Each part gives support to the other part. Each part strengthens the other part. Each part is necessary for the other part. No action is considered without îmân.

The true connection between the servant and Allâh ﷻ

The essential thing is that there has to be a true and correct connection between the servant and Allâh ﷻ. The true connection in this regard is that the person must believe that it is Allâh ﷻ who created this universe. لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ – He is the one who created it and He is the one who is running it and administering it as well. He has not retired from this. As is the belief in many other religions. They believe in a Creator and they believe in His divinity. However, that He is running this universe, that it is still dependent on Him, that nothing happens without His order – they do not believe in all this. Even among the Muslims there is a section that has no physical or practical relationship with Allâh ﷻ. They have a historical relationship with Him concerning this world. They believe that Allâh ﷻ had created this world at some time or the other and that He had brought together this universe. After this, they consider themselves to be free. As for the remaining departments of Islam – they allot to different people. They believe profit and loss, benefit and harm to be in the hands of others. This is what they think.

So the first thing is to correct our beliefs. We have to believe in all the Prophets, in all the Messengers and in all those divine Books. That *da'wah* which has a correct methodology, which is with the true spirit of Islam will therefore attest to correct beliefs first and foremost. There is no good in claiming thus: "Our character is very good. Our conduct is perfect. Our ways

are correct. We do not do anything wrong. Why then will we go to hell? Why, then, are we astray?"

The first thing, the first demand is that a servant must consider himself to be a servant. He must believe in Allâh ﷻ as the creator, the owner and the master of this universe. Thereafter – عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ – he must do good deeds. The criterion for these good deeds has to be the Sharî'ah. The Sharî'ah will tell him that this deed is good and this deed is not good. Me, you, the legislators, the intelligentsia or the lawmakers cannot decide this. Rather, what Islam says, what Rasûlullâh ﷺ says that this is a good deed, then it is a good deed. If they say that this is not a good deed, then so be it.

Value the bounty of Islam

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ص وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَآءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖ إِخْوَانًا ج وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ.

"Hold fast to the rope of Allâh altogether and do not sow dissension. Remember the bounty of Allâh upon you when you were enemies of one another, then He cast love in your hearts, now you became brothers by His grace. You were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. In this way Allâh expounds His verses to you so that you may be guided." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 103)

A very great bounty indeed

This verse ought to be before us all the time. It ought to remain imprinted in our hearts. This verse mentions a great bounty which Allâh ﷻ bestowed upon this nation of Islam.

We were all wandering in the pitch darkness of ignorance. We neither knew what was *tauḥîd* and prophet-hood nor did we know anything about resurrection and the after life. We were totally ignorant of moral values and were completely uninformed about correct religious teachings. We were engrossed in superstitions and myths. We were the targets of wrongs and the oppressions and tyrannies of oppressive authorities. Humanity was being trampled upon from all sides.

On one hand you had leaders who were totally free to do as they pleased. On the other hand, the scholars of religion were seated like gods. The masses were compelled into their worship and blind obedience of them. As Allâh ﷻ says:

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللهِ

"They took their scholars and dervishes to be lords, to the exclusion of Allâh." (Sûrah at-Tauba, verse 31)

Islam came and enlightened every corner of the world with its brilliance. The bounty of Islam was for the entire mankind. It was like that rain which does not differentiate between black and white, slave and master. It was a cloud that irrigated the highlands, the low lying regions, the lush lands and the deserts.

There is no bounty greater than this. So much so that even this life, which is a source of numerous forms of enjoyment and happiness, would have been one continuous chastisement if we did not have this bounty of Islam, absolute monotheism, and îmân. This life would have been no more than a bridge that would convey us to hell.

Allâh ﷻ blessed us with the bounty of Islam. Millions of thanks are due to Him. The very essence of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, his commissioning as a Prophet, *da'wah* and jihâd are all indisputable favours in the acquisition of this bounty.

This is a favour of Allâh ﷻ

وَاذْكُرْ نِعْمَتَ اللهِ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَآءً

Remember this favour of Allâh ﷻ when you were enemies of one other. When you were thirsty for the blood of each other.

فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ

Then He cast love in your hearts.

فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖ إِخْوَانًا

By the favour and grace of Allâh ﷻ, you became brothers of each other. Where will you find big and small, rich and poor, leader and follower all sitting like this shoulder to shoulder? Is there any such place in the world where there is no differentiation between the Sultan Maḥmûd and the slave, Ayâz? Once you enter the mosque, you are all equal, you are all one – فأصبحتم بنعمته إخوانا .

Present day history does not have a record of all the disputes that took place in the past – disputes between the different races, between different colours, between big and small, between the classes, between rich and poor, between landowners and those who toiled on the lands, between different language groups, between cultures, etc. All these disputes were found in this world and the blood of each other was shed - فأصبحتم بنعمته إخوانا .

Allâh ﷻ then says:

وَكُنتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا

You were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. This is the favour of Allâh ﷻ. If this religion did not come, if Allâh ﷻ did not send His Messengers, if Allâh's final Prophet did not come – then there was nothing left to stop us from jumping and leaping into the pit of hell.

Look today into the world and see how many great philosophers, intellectuals, scholars and government leaders there are who are totally deprived of understanding a "common-sense" religion like Islam. However, Allâh ﷻ blessed me and you with this treasure of Islam. We should not be influenced by any philosophy, movement, racial or tribal slogans. There is a Hadîth in *Bukhârî*:

ثلاث من جمعهن فقد استكمل الإيمان

There are three things, which if found in a person, he has completed his îmân.

أن يكون الله ورسوله أحب إليه مما سواهما

One is that Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ should be more beloved to him than anything else. Of all the things that are present in the world, he should love Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ the most.

وأن يكره أن يعود إلى الكفر كما يكره أن يقذف في النار

He should experience such distress and such abhorrence over the mere thought of going towards *kufr* just as he would experience distress and abhorrence over being flung into the fire.

This distress and abhorrence will be in an absolutely natural and physical way. Even if he sees in a dream that he is committing an act of *kufr*, that he is doing something that would harm Islam, that he has become involved in some conspiracy against Islam, that he is going under some flag that is against Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ - then he wakes up screaming. All his house people gather around him and ask him if everything is okay. They ask him: "What is wrong? Have you seen some frightening dream?" He replies: "What frightening dream are you talking about? What is that? I have seen such an evil dream that I hope that Allâh ﷻ will never permit me to see such a dream again. I have seen that the wing of *kufr* is coming to engulf my house. The cloud of *kufr* is coming to my house."

The greatest bounty in this world

We have to have this awareness that what a great bounty Allâh ﷻ bestowed upon us! To be blessed with the *kalimah*, to be blessed with the true belief in Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, to be blessed with *tauḥîd* – this is the greatest bounty in this world. The kingdom of the entire world is worthy of being sacrificed for the *kalimah* of *tauḥîd*. The value of this îmân is such that if the kingdom of the entire world is placed on one side, and it is said to a Muslim that you can have this entire kingdom but you will have to deprive yourself of îmân. On hearing this, he ought to scream out, he ought to fall unconscious, he ought to think, what sin have I committed that I am offered this kingdom in exchange for my îmân?

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He should experience such distress and such abhorrence over the mere thought of going towards *kufr* just as he would experience distress and abhorrence over being flung into the fire.

This distress and abhorrence will be in an absolutely natural and physical way. Even if he sees in a dream that he is committing an act of *kufr*, that he is doing something that would harm Islam, that he has become involved in some conspiracy against Islam, that he is going under some flag that is against Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ - then he wakes up screaming. All his house people gather around him and ask him if everything is okay. They ask him: "What is wrong? Have you seen some frightening dream?" He replies: "What frightening dream are you talking about? What is that? I have seen such an evil dream that I hope that Allâh ﷻ will never permit me to see such a dream again. I have seen that the wing of *kufr* is coming to engulf my house. The cloud of *kufr* is coming to my house."

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There are blockades in all directions, all the paths are closed, all the windows are shut. There is only the path of Islam. There is only one window which Allâh ﷻ has opened for us through Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Allâh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَ اللهِ الإِسْلاَمُ

"Surely the (true and accepted) religion in the sight of Allâh is Islam alone." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 19)

As long as full recognition of this fact remains within the Muslims and as long as they hold on to these principles, they can never go astray. Nor will they become a target of calamities and hardships.

Collective thinking and the desire for sacrifice

وَلاَ تُلْقُوْا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

The thinking of the Muslims has to be collective

We should make our thinking collective. This way of thinking that we worry about our personal benefits irrespective of what happens to Islam, irrespective of what happens to Muslim society – has caused great harm to us. The Qur'ân says:

وَلاَ تُلْقُوْا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

Many people treat this verse similar to how they treat the following verse:

وَلاَ تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ

"Do not go near salâh."

Some shameless people who have no fear of Allâh ﷻ say: "Look! The Qur'ân says that we should not go near salâh."

Many people may not say this with an evil intention, but some of them think, due to misunderstanding, that the above verse tells us to keep away from all that is dangerous, from all that is harmful. For example, if someone asks them to go out for *tabligh* even if it means having to bear some harm to their business, they will reply:

وَلاَ تُلْقُوْا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

They will say: "Look! The Qur'ân says that we should not throw ourselves into destruction. We should not intentionally

do something which would cause us harm or loss." [They say this] despite the fact that this verse has no relation whatsoever to what they are saying. The demand of this verse is completely the opposite.

The Sahâbî Abû Ayyûb Ansârî ﷺ had heard a similar approach to this verse. He then said to the people: "Hold on! Hold on! You do not know. This verse was revealed with regard to us Ansâr. You should therefore ask us its interpretation. What do you'll know about it? The story is that when Islam came to Medina, it was weak. There was no one to support it. It was we, the Ansâr, who supported it. We supported it with our lives and our wealth. We turned a blind eye to our personal needs and demands. All the time we were moving about ready to offer our lives for Islam. If we were called to the battlefield of jihad, we were there. If we were called to the field of inviting towards Islam, we were there. If we were called to spend our wealth, we were there. In short, we did not turn around and look at what is happening – we did not look at what was happening to our farms and orchards. We did not look at what was happening to our businesses. After some time, we saw that, through the grace of Allâh ﷻ, the Muslims had increased considerably in number. That Islam was no longer in pain. It was no longer without friends and supporters. On the other hand we saw that our wealth and properties were greatly affected. Our businesses were experiencing a quiet period. Our market places were gone down. Our business were going bankrupt. Our orchards were running dry. All this was because we did not have the time to pay attention to them. We therefore said to ourselves that we will take a few days break. We will not be completely free and it will not be a total holiday. Rather, it will just be a break for a few days. The police get a holiday, students get a holiday, teachers get a holiday. So we too will take a short holiday. No sooner these thoughts crossed our minds, this verse was revealed. We did not even express these thoughts and this verse

was revealed. What are you people thinking? At a time when Islam requires your help, your services and your sacrifices, you are talking about a holiday?! This holiday is a poisonous killer. This holiday is synonymous to suicide. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ وَلاَ تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ، وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"Spend in the cause of Allâh and do not throw yourselves into destruction. And do good, surely Allâh loves the doers of good." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

This is the entire verse. Now people are even writing this verse in their *fatwâs*.

The needs of the Muslims have to be considered

At one time, it had become extremely difficult to perform hajj for those who live in India. Taking into consideration the sea journey, sailing ships, and looting by pirates, some *'ulamâ'* issued the *fatwâ* that hajj is not compulsory on Indian Muslims. The proof which they provided was this verse:

وَلاَ تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

May Allâh ﷻ reward Shâh 'Abdul 'Azîz *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, his students and his *khulafâ'* for they started a movement against this and issued a *fatwâ* against this. His *khulafâ'*, nephews and friends and relatives then began going on hajj with such a hustle and bustle that this idea completely disappeared from the hearts of the people. If not, this notion would have settled in India that sea journeys were dangerous and they therefore do not have to perform hajj. Today it would be hajj, tomorrow this idea would have affected zakâh, then fasting, then salâh, and so on. Then they would have complained about offering salâh in the cold winters and making *wudû'* with cold water. Then they would have complained

about going for *fajr ṣalâh* early in summer and thereby spoil their sleep. While quoting this verse all the time:

وَلاَ تُلْقُوْا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 195)

Eventually the entire *Dîn* would have been abandoned. So if the minds of Muslims are confined to individual interests, they should change to collective interests. In other words, the needs of the Muslims at large should be taken into consideration. If each person confines himself to worrying about his own interests and needs, how will the service of *Dîn* be made?

What we are saying is that these are the needs and requirements of our *Dîn*. We should all look at the needs of our respective areas and localities. We should see to the needs of our respective mosques. We should see to the needs of our respective *madâris*. We should see to the needs of Islamic education in our respective areas. We should watch the habits and evil customs of the Muslims in our respective areas. It is because of these evils that the mercy of Allâh ﷻ is held back from us. The rains of mercy are waiting, but they are not showering upon us because these faults are found in the Muslims, these sins are being committed by the Muslims, they are committing these crimes. If this collective concern for Islam does not come into you, then it is difficult for Islam to remain in a country like India.

A dangerous mindset

If we do not have this collective mindset, no one can do anything. No one will have any motivation. Each one will be worried about his self – that my children should get educated. They should get a job quickly. They must get high salaries. People will have no other concern. This is a very dangerous mindset. This mindset and this attitude has extinguished the

lights of entire nations. Wherever this mindset establishes itself, people will be destroyed. Even the greatest of reformers can spend his entire life there, it will have no effect on them. This mindset is taking a hold in our country and is present. No one is worried about the other. Each one is worried about his own benefits, his own prosperity, his own house and his own business. He has no interest in anything except his own progress and his own success. All the problems that we experience are because our minds do not have this collective attitude. We are not worried about the Muslim *ummah*. Our minds are individual, totally personal.

We have to set right this affairs – the problems facing the *ummah* and the needs of Islam should be ever present in our hearts. If we do not have this, then there is a very great danger. No organization and no institute can do anything. Nor can the greatest of writers and orators do anything. May Allâh enable you to understand this so that you can understand further as well.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I, you, we all believe in the Qur'ân. We consider it to be the miracle of Allâh ﷻ, the miracle of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and the speech of Allâh ﷻ. However, everyone does not know this fact (and not knowing it will not cause you to be taken to task for it because there are different levels of knowledge) that the Qur'ân is a miracle in its entirety, and that it is also a miracle in parts. In other words, each verse of the Qur'ân is a miracle on its own. We all believe that the Qur'ân is a miracle but very few people think of every verse being a miracle on its own. The miraculous nature of the Qur'ân expresses itself in different eras and in different situations. It would be even disrespectful to compare it to the sun. It is the distinctiveness of the Qur'ân that you read it not once, not a hundred times, but thousands of times and yet it seems that it was revealed just now.

This was experienced by Abû Bakr ؓ. When Rasûlullâh ﷺ passed away, people were overcome by depression. The people did not flee nor did they fall. But they were shaken as to what the future holds. It crossed the minds of many great people as to what was going to happen to this religion, will it remain or not? Abû Bakr ؓ recited this verse before those who said: "No one should say that Rasûlullâh ﷺ has left this world." Such people did not believe that Rasûlullâh ﷺ could leave this world without the entire world embracing Islam. When Abû Bakr ؓ recited the following verse, even senior Sahâbah ؓ said that it was as though this verse was revealed just now, for this particular situation. The verse is:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلاَّ رَسُوْلٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ، أَفَإِنْ مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَّضُرَّ اللهَ شَيْئًا.

"Muhammad is but a Messenger. Many Messengers have passed before him. So if he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels will never harm Allâh in any way." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 144)

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

The responsibility of the Muslim *ummah*

إِلاَّ تَفْعَلُوْهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ

"If you do not do likewise, persecution will spread in the land and there will be great destructions." (Sûrah al-Anfâl, verse 73)

I am an ordinary student of the Qur'ân. You all know that the Qur'ân is recited daily, and according to the *taufiq* of Allâh ﷻ, it is recited repeatedly, and more and more of it is recited. It is a rule that when a person looks at something with astonishment and is surprised, this surprise of his does not remain forever. It also goes away after some time. However, I will now tell you something about my own self.

In this world, there are two criteria for weight and consideration. One is the shape, figure or size of a thing. The other is the value of a thing. However, Allâh ﷻ has given preference to value over size. Whenever I recite this verse of Sûrah al-Anfâl:

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ط إِلاَّ تَفْعَلُوْهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ.

"Those who are unbelievers, they are friends to each other. If you do not do likewise, persecution will spread in the land and there will be great destruction."

I get drowned in the sea of astonishment. That to whom is this being said? To that handful of Muslims. To that small group comprising of the *Anṣâr* in their homeland [Medina] and a few *Muhâjirîn* who left Mecca and emigrated to this place. To this small group that was not more than 1500 people at that time.

Allâh ﷻ is inviting them towards brotherhood and kinship. Allâh ﷻ is creating a bond between the *Muhâjirîn* and the *Anṣâr* and vice versa. After creating the true spirit of brotherhood in them, He is ordering them to become a new single unit. A unit that is founded on îmân and conviction, on

the unity of the *kalimah*, on being concerned about the well-being and welfare of humanity, on being steadfast on the principles and belief system of Islam.

Allâh ﷻ is addressing this small group and telling them that if they displayed shortcomings in this regard, if they were lax in establishing this brotherhood, if they showed neglect in maintaining this unit which the world was unaware of and which gave to history hundreds of years of goodness, if they showed weakness in this brotherhood which is bound to a very great and lofty message, if they rendered this unity which is established on true and genuine brotherhood fruitless, if they did all this, then persecution will spread in the land and there will be great destruction.

Just think! What was the nature of this small group of people who were living in Yathrib (which later came to be known as *Madînatur Rasûl* – the city of the Messenger ﷺ)? What was the strength in their numbers? What was their weight on the political scale? What was their position in the international arena? What weight did they have in the social, economic and even intellectual world? Their numbers were counted three times (as mentioned in *Ṣaḥîḥ Bukhârî* – vol. 1, p. 43). The last time that they were counted, they numbered 1500.[1]

Just ponder over this; that who is addressed in this verse? Are the Romans addressed who, at that time, were controlling half the world? Who had the largest empire, together with their culture and civilization which influenced the entire world. Who had the largest army. Who were masters of the international and political arena. Are they being addressed?

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[1] According to some Traditions, Sûrah al-Anfâl was revealed around the time of the battle of Badr. At that time, the Muslims must have numbered even less than this final count.

Are the Persians being addressed, who, together with the Romans, had divided the inhabited world and controlled it?

Without doubt, the Romans and Persians were outwardly controlling the destiny of humanity. They were navigating the ship of life. The reins of culture and civilization were in their hands. (If it is correct to say this), then they had total control over the means and resources of life.

What! Are they being addressed?:

إِلاَّ تَفْعَلُوْهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ.

"If you do not do likewise, persecution will spread in the land and there will be great destruction."

Try and gauge the terrorizing nature of the words "persecution will spread in the land". Try and gauge the volume of these words, their weight and their expansiveness. The verse does not merely say فساد, rather, it says فساد كبير – great destruction. This is being said to that small and limited group of Muslims upon whom the foundation of Islam was placed, on whose shoulders the message of Islam was placed. To that small group having individual strength – that if you display any shortcoming in establishing an Islamic, faithful, humanitarian and just brotherhood, if you display neglect in establishing unity among yourselves, if you do not establish this unity on îmân, sincerity, giving preference to others, sacrifice and surrender – then persecution will spread in the land and there will be great destruction.

What was the influence of the Muslims of that time when they numbered just a few thousand? They are being told this at that time. They are being given this authority, this value and this stature in the world!

From this announcement it is clearly established that the stature and influence of the Muslim *ummah* is in its value and worth

and not in its numbers and physique. The stature of this *ummah* and its status is based on its îmân, its beliefs, its noble characteristics, its conscious heart, its perception and intuition that have penetrated its body, and that restless spirit which influences its intellect and its contemplation.

The value and importance of the Muslim *ummah* is based on those distinctive qualities which Allâh ﷻ bestowed it with. There is no consideration for numbers and means. Nor is it based on the length and breadth of its lands over which it rules. Nor is it based on how long a time it leaves its mark in this world.

I am measuring this group of Muslims, irrespective of how small in number it may be, according to this measure. I am looking at it through that binoculars of Islam which Allâh ﷻ bestowed to it.

The status and responsibility of the thinkers and leaders

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا ۟ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ.

"O believers! Be patient, encourage each other in remaining patient and remain steadfast on the borders. And continue fearing Allâh so that you may reach your goal." (Sûrah Âl-Imrân, verse 200)

The order and request to remain patient (اصبروا) and to encourage each other in remaining patient (صابروا) requires contemplation and consideration. When considering the life of peoples and nations, and the rise and fall of nations, individual patience and steadfastness is not sufficient. There is the need for a general environment and atmosphere of collective patience, steadfastness, courage and motivation. There is the need for every individual to be a support for the other, he has to be a place of refuge for the other, he has to remain patient and steadfast himself while calling and encouraging others towards patience and steadfastness. His life, his îmân, his conviction, his patience, his trust in Allâh ﷻ, his courage and determination, his noble character – all have to be means in creating confidence in others and a guiding light for them. On seeing him, feet that are slipping must be able to become firm, those who are lacking in courage should be filled with lofty and firm courage. In such an environment, it must become so difficult and so reproachable to say or do something that shows lack of courage and impatience just as at a time of doubts and misgivings a person is asked to show patience and courage and expected to display fortitude and steadfastness.

The border to safeguard Islam

Thereafter, Allâh ﷻ says:

وَرَابِطُوْا

"and remain steadfast on the borders."

At this point, it should be borne in mind that there are two types of borders. One is the military and territorial border. The other is the figurative border. Military and territorial borders are also very important. All energetic and high minded nations spend much resources in protecting these borders. They are prepared to sacrifice lives for this. However, such borders do not give them absolute authority in this world. The defeat of a nation on the battlefield or the trampling over of its borders does not put an end to such a nation. Nations have been defeated in the past and they have also been victorious. They have been abandoning their borders and regaining them as well. This rise and fall, this ebb and flow has always been experienced in the era of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the era of the Sahâbah ﷺ and all other eras in Islamic history. Much reliance cannot be placed on the capability of the nation that never experiences this rise and fall, that never tastes the bitterness of defeat and that only enjoys the taste and sweetness of victory. This is because both these experiences [victory and defeat] are necessary for the nurturing and training of nations. Allâh ﷻ caused Rasûlullâh ﷺ and his beloved Sahâbah ﷺ to tread both these paths.

However, figurative borders are the complete opposite. Defeat on any figurative border at times changes the course of history for centuries. And at times it even puts a complete end to a nation. Today, this figurative border is under trial by the Muslims of India. The border of a separate Muslim personality, the border of Islam's independent culture, the border of Muslim personal law, the border of language and culture, the border of educating the future generations, etc. It is only special people who can safeguard and protect these borders. It is only such people who possess the knowledge, understanding, perception, universality, level-headedness, rationality and the means and resources for the perfection of this goal. It is their timeous responsibility and vigilance, their restlessness and their anxiety that can delay such a danger for centuries and protect the

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ummah from this danger. Their slightest negligence and laxity in this regard can cause the *ummah* to lag behind for centuries. If they give preference to personal objectives and benefits over that of the *ummah* and their personal dangers over the real dangers that are facing the *ummah*, then defeat on these borders is certain.

Two responsibilities of Muslims

We have to take a lesson from events around us

Allâh ﷻ repeatedly reminds us Muslims in the Qur'ân that we should learn from events and incidents and draw correct conclusions from them. Allâh ﷻ created a special relationship between the causes and the results of these causes. Medicines have a special effect, the leaves of trees have a special effect, even grass has a special effect. Ways, manners and practices of life are even more powerful and have a greater effect. This is because medicines, foods, plants, rocks, etc. have been created for the protection of man and to safeguard man from the pain of illnesses, while life itself is the actual thing. We have to take a lesson from events and incidents that take place around us. Not only does the Qur'ân instruct us to do this, it expresses displeasure at not taking a lesson and rebukes us for this insensitivity.

Allâh ﷻ says:

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِي السَّمٰوتِ وَالاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ.

"There are numerous signs in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, and they do not ponder over them." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verse 105)

In other words, there are so many signs in the heavens and the earth which these people turn away from and do not benefit from. They do not learn a lesson from them. This same theme is expressed in even harsher words:

وَمَا تُغْنِي الآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ.

"But of no avail are the signs and the warners for those people who do not accept." (Sûrah Yûnus, verse 101)

Allâh ﷻ says at another place:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الآفَاقِ وَفِيْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ. أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ.

"We shall show them Our signs in this world and in their very selves until it becomes apparent to them that this is correct. Is your Sustainer insufficient in being a witness over everything?" (Sûrah Hâ Mîm as-Sajdah, verse 53)

The first responsibility

The first responsibility of the Muslims wherever they may be and in whichever country they may be is to endeavour to make their fellow country people to enjoy this bounty of the true religion [Islam] which Allâh ﷻ has blessed them with. They should always have a concern for this. This concern used to be found the most in the Messengers of Allâh ﷻ. This concern was to such an extent, that Allâh ﷻ used to repeatedly console Rasûlullâh ﷺ in this regard:

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ أَلاَّ يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ.

"You may perhaps kill yourself over the fact that they do not believe." (Sûrah ash-Shu'arâ', verse 3)

After the Messengers, this concern and worry should be found in each person according to his position. So the first duty is that irrespective of where the Muslims may be living, they should spread this message. They should spread this favour which Allâh ﷻ showered upon them, this guidance which He gave them, and this light which He gave them. The entire Qur'ân is filled with this theme. Allâh ﷻ made this the responsibility and duty of the Muslims.

The second responsibility

The second responsibility comes on the basis of Islam, humanity and sound mind. This responsibility is that we should introduce ourselves – as to which religion we belong to, what

principles we accept and to what things our lives are bound. Together with this, we must attract and draw people towards us through our character and mannerisms. We should encourage people to study our religion. We should create a curiosity in them with regard to the religion to which we are bound. They must start asking questions such as: What type of people are these? What religion do they believe in? We see that they do not harm anyone. They are concerned about the well-being of others. They do not consider wealth to be the be all and the end all. They have some other standards, some other values, some other ideals. What type of people are these that even the greatest amount of wealth cannot buy off, which cannot move them from their principles, which cannot even stir them to oppression? Do they have some other world before them which is concealed from us?

There are certain things which have an impact on the mind and which sometimes cause a revolution in the person's life and his thinking.

Those who forbid corruption in the land

فَلَوْلاَ كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوْا بَقِيَّةٍ يَّنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الأَرْضِ إِلاَّ قَلِيْلاً مِّمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ.

"Why were there not in the generations before you such people in whom there remained a remnant of virtue forbidding corruption in the land, except a few of them whom We saved." (Sûrah Hûd, verse 116)

This verse not only provides a true reflection of a particular era but of many eras of the past. It gives us a true picture of those past eras. It is unfortunate that the restlessness, the special effect and the lights that are flashing from this verse cannot be fully translated into any other language.

The Qur'ân reminds this *ummah* of its status in the field of propagation and leadership, and of its responsibility in the fields of reformation, commanding good and prohibiting evil. The Qur'ân awakens the sentiments and perception of this *ummah* by reminding it of the past nations.

Why did it not happen like this that in the generations and the eras that have passed there should have been such people whose conscience were not so dead and whose hearts would have felt some pain for humanity? Why were they not like that? ينهون عن الفساد في الأرض – forbidding corruption in the land. Why did those people not stand up against this universal corruption? What! From among this large population, were there not even a few people who had some pain for humanity? Who could draw correct conclusions from their circumstances, who could see the dangers and predict the consequences, and thereby have some desire to save whatever was left of human culture and civilization. They could have done something. They could have threatened the people. They could have cried before them and tried to win them over. They could have held some people by

the hands and guided them. All this is included in the present verse. Those who have some taste of the Arabic language can perceive the tone in which all this is said.

The words أولـــو بقية which the Qur'ân has used, (despite having a little knowledge of the Arabic language), I can say that I am unable to fully translate these words. Those in whom the spark of concern and perception is not totally extinguished as yet and those whose sentiments have not breathed their last as yet, who still have some value for the truth, who still have traces of the Messengers' endeavours within them, those who have seen the fate of nations, who have seen what the results of actions are, who have seen what problems and difficulties are caused by moral decay, and that when this flood comes – how it engulfs everyone within it – without looking whether it is the shack of a poor person or the palace of a wealthy person, whether it is the house of a criminal or the shelter of an orphan and widow. When a flood comes, it takes away everyone with it. In like manner, when fire strikes something, it does not distinguish between anyone. Even good people get burnt. A major portion of the population becomes a target of all this. On such occasions, it is only a handful of people who get ready to combat this flood.

Whenever I recite this verse, it strikes at my heart:

فَلَوْلاَ كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوْا بَقِيَّةٍ يَّنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الأَرْضِ إِلاَّ قَلِيْلاً مِّمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ.

"Why were there not in the generations before you such people in whom there remained a remnant of virtue forbidding corruption in the land, except a few of them whom We saved." (Sûrah Hûd, verse 116)

The Qur'ân did not say يـــنهون عن الترك – forbidding abstention, nor did it say ينهون عن المعصية – forbidding sin. Rather, it used the words يـــنهون عـــن الفســـاد في الأرض – these are just a handful of people who

place their heads in their palms and come forward. In so doing, they turn the entire tide of time.

The history of *da'wah* and *'azîmah* (people who have displayed strength, courage, determination) does not tell us that when there is moral decay and moral degeneration, seventy to eighty percent of the population come onto the field [in order to reform the situation]. You can study the history of any era and you will learn that when corruption spread, a few servants of Allâh ﷻ, not even equivalent to the amount of salt in the flour, came onto the field. Other people then joined them and this movement progressed. They then secured some power for themselves and then acquired some position. The *da'wah* of the Prophets is extremely wide, deep and at its peak. But their deputies are these very أولـوا بقـيـة – people who had a remnant of virtue.

Such people came onto the field in every era in order to combat this corruption. They stood up to combat this corruption irrespective of what form it came in. If it is the idol of materialism; they reduce it to smithereens. If it is the idol of egotism, they come into the field in order to break it.

Islam needs authority

الَّذِيْنَ إِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكوةَ وَأَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الأُمُوْرِ.

"Those whom, when We give them power in the land, they establish ṣalâh, they give zakâh, they command the good and they prohibit the evil. In Allâh's hands is the final outcome of all events." (Sûrah al-Ḥajj, verse 41)

These words are very comprehensive, extensive, significant and thought provoking. History bears testimony to every single word.

Allâh ﷻ says:

الَّذِيْنَ إِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ

These are people whom, if We were to give them authority in the land, if We were to set firm their feet at any place, they will not become engrossed in comforts and enjoyment. They will not compete with each other in constructing buildings. They will not gather great quantities of wealth whereby their civilization would become a beautiful bouquet and their cities would appear to be showered with wealth. A fabulous bird will be seen sitting on everyone's head. They will be seen sitting on the greatest of conveyances. Their dining tables will be laid with different types of exotic foods. No! No such thing. Rather, in contradiction to the history of conquests, invasions, the history of wars, the history of human courage and determination, their condition will be:

الَّذِيْنَ إِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلوةَ

If We were to give them power and authority in the land, they will establish ṣalâh. I am not translating this as, "they will offer ṣalâh". The Qur'ân does not merely say صلوة . Rather, it says أقاموا

الصلوة – in other words, they would make salâh an intrinsic part of their lives. They will make arrangements for it. They will give due importance to it. They will give due importance to the type of environment that is necessary for salâh, to the knowledge that is necessary for salâh, to the places [mosques] that are necessary for salâh. The words أقاموا الصلوة include all these aspects.

وَآتُوا الزَّكوةَ

They will establish the injunction of zakâh and they will cause it to flourish.

وَأَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

They will command the good and prohibit the evil. It should be borne in mind that for the words معروف and منكر, the Qur'ân and the Hadîth use the words أمر "command, order" and نهي "prohibit, forbid". Both these words are not used for appealing or requesting. The Arabic language is not so restricted that it only has the words أمر ونهي without having other words. Without having words showing humility, meekness, appeal, request. Rather, wherever these words [معروف ومنكر] are used, the words أمر ونهي are used for them.

As in other verses, even in this verse, the words أمروا and نهوا are used. These words are different from those showing advice, invitation, recommendation and request. From this you can imagine the amount of authority that is enjoyed by those who fulfill this responsibility of أمر ونهي – commanding and forbidding. From this we can see what honour and respect they hold. And the fear of punishment and loss, in the event of not obeying their orders. It is therefore necessary for such a group

or such an *ummah* that has been created for the fulfillment of this responsibility to have political authority and strength.

This is because أمر ونهي demands strength. It demands that position whereby we could confidently say that this is correct and this is incorrect. أمر ونهي has some loftiness in it. It does not have the meaning of "request" in it. It entails commanding and forbidding. For this, a person has to have power within him. He has to have a certain position and loftiness. He has to have a certain amount of confidence. He has to command a certain amount of respect in the hearts of others. All this, so that he can command, he can forbid.

This would therefore mean that Islam needs authority so that it does not always have to say: "If this were done, it would be good." "This is our request. We are urging you to do this." "We are inviting." Such statements and actions will continue their own course. But the measure and the criterion of the Qur'ân is that of أمر ونهي – commanding and forbidding. The Muslims have to acquire such strength and power whereby whatever position they climb onto, they are able to command and forbid. Human nature may praise you and be happy with you. But the total reformation of the human race cannot be done without this authority and power. The result of this will be أقاموا الصلوة وآتوا الزكوة - establishing the salâh and giving the zakah. And أمروا بالمعروف – commanding the good and نهوا عن المنكر – forbidding the evil.

It is therefore necessary that such people come into power and authority in whose hearts is the fear of Allâh ﷻ and who have the quality of piety and righteousness – *taqwâ*. Their greatest concern should be for the hereafter. Their hallmark should be:

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وَآتُوا الزَّكوةَ

They will establish the injunction of zakâh and they will cause it to flourish.

وَأَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

They will command the good and prohibit the evil. It should be borne in mind that for the words معروف and منكر, the Qur'ân and the Hadîth use the words أمر "command, order" and نهي "prohibit, forbid". Both these words are not used for appealing or requesting. The Arabic language is not so restricted that it only has the words أمر ونهي without having other words. Without having words showing humility, meekness, appeal, request. Rather, wherever these words [معروف ومنكر] are used, the words أمر ونهي are used for them.

As in other verses, even in this verse, the words أمروا and نهوا are used. These words are different from those showing advice, invitation, recommendation and request. From this you can imagine the amount of authority that is enjoyed by those who fulfill this responsibility of أمر ونهي – commanding and forbidding. From this we can see what honour and respect they hold. And the fear of punishment and loss, in the event of not obeying their orders. It is therefore necessary for such a group

or such an *ummah* that has been created for the fulfillment of this responsibility to have political authority and strength.

This is because أمر ونهي demands strength. It demands that position whereby we could confidently say that this is correct and this is incorrect. أمر ونهي has some loftiness in it. It does not have the meaning of "request" in it. It entails commanding and forbidding. For this, a person has to have power within him. He has to have a certain position and loftiness. He has to have a certain amount of confidence. He has to command a certain amount of respect in the hearts of others. All this, so that he can command, he can forbid.

This would therefore mean that Islam needs authority so that it does not always have to say: "If this were done, it would be good." "This is our request. We are urging you to do this." "We are inviting." Such statements and actions will continue their own course. But the measure and the criterion of the Qur'ân is that of أمر ونهي – commanding and forbidding. The Muslims have to acquire such strength and power whereby whatever position they climb onto, they are able to command and forbid. Human nature may praise you and be happy with you. But the total reformation of the human race cannot be done without this authority and power. The result of this will be أقاموا الصلوة وآتوا الزكوة - establishing the salâh and giving the zakah. And أمروا بالمعروف – commanding the good and نهوا عن المنكر – forbidding the evil.

It is therefore necessary that such people come into power and authority in whose hearts is the fear of Allâh ﷻ and who have the quality of piety and righteousness – *taqwâ*. Their greatest concern should be for the hereafter. Their hallmark should be:

الَّذِيْنَ إِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتَوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَأَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ.

"Those whom, when We give them power in the land, they establish salâh, they give zakâh, they command the good and they prohibit the evil."

In other words, these things: establishing salâh, giving zakah, commanding good, prohibiting evil – these are the objectives and goals. These are not the means. We cannot reach a divine government through these things. Rather, it is a divine government that would move towards these things. Therefore, the most important thing is to make the environment conducive to this. This would then have to be proliferated.

The need to abstain from emulating un-Islamic customs

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا لاَ تَقُوْلُوْا رَاعِنَا وَقُوْلُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوْا، وَلِلْكَافِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيْمٌ.

"O believers! Do not say: 'Râ'ina' but say 'Unzurnâ' and continue listening [attentively]. And for the unbelievers is a painful punishment." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 104)

We have to know, and those who know have to refresh this in their minds, as to which occasion this verse was revealed? What is it asking of us? What is the message in it for us?

The meaning of راعنا

The word راعنا is an authentic and eloquent Arabic word which means "pay a bit of attention to us", "take us [listeners] into consideration". The word انظرنا is also an authentic and eloquent Arabic word which means "wait for us a bit", "check whether we have heard what you said or not". So both words are Arabic words and both are eloquent words. However, what is the story that Allâh ﷻ is stopping us from using one of them? How is that this prohibition is given place in the Qur'ân which is going to be recited till the resurrection? That era [of the Sahâbah ﷺ] has ended. The Qur'ân is recited in many countries and lands where the Arabic language is neither spoken nor understood. Why, then, has it been accorded such importance? Why, then, has it been included in a Book that is to be recited till the resurrection, that is recited in every country, that is included in every translation of this Book? This is something to ponder over. What is wrong with this word that we have been prohibited from using it while we are taught to use another word that is quite similar in meaning?

The background to this

Those groups that complain that they are wronged and victimized, and who are suffering from an inferiority complex give vent to their feelings by words, by taunting, by mocking and ridiculing. They satisfy themselves in this way.

It was the habit of the Jews that when they used to attend the assembly of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and he used to commence his speech, they would say راعنا – take us into consideration. However, they used to stress this word a bit and say راعيـنا – which means "our shepherd". Those of clear hearts and minds would not even think that Rasûlullâh ﷺ has been mocked at by this. The Jews felt that all those who were not from the progeny of Isrâ'îl (Ya'qûb عليه السلام) were on a lower level equal to inanimate objects and animals. The word Gentile is still applied by them to refer to a non-Jew. They feel that an unlettered person can be treated in any way they like – that this was permitted in their religion. If they spoke a lie to him, it was not considered to be a lie. If they stole something of his, it was not considered to be theft. If they oppressed him, it was no sin. They used to say:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الأُمِّيِّيْنَ سَبِيْلٌ

"There is no sin on us in usurping the rights of the illiterates." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 75)

The Sahâbah ﷺ did not think about it in this light. However, Allâh ﷻ is all-knowing and all-aware. He also understands any word when it is said by twisting the tongue or pronouncing it in a different way. Allâh ﷻ says to the Sahâbah ﷺ that the Arabic language is very extensive. Instead of saying راعنا , they should say انظرنا – for there is no doubt in this latter word.

Allâh ﷻ teaches caution

Just imagine that when Allâh ﷻ teaches us caution with regard to just a single word which was spoken for thousands of years

and which is still found in the Arabic vocabulary, then why will Allâh ﷻ not become displeased if we were to choose the features and customs of non-Muslims and pagan nations? Why will He not become angry if we were to imitate their ways and mannerisms?

When the grasp of their religion became weak or when their religion lost its control over the non-Muslim inhabitants of India, in order to re-establish this contact with their religion, the Hindus invented such gatherings, attractions and celebrations. Without all this, their religion cannot maintain any control over their society. It was not a question of showing servitude before Allâh ﷻ. Now how will it be known that these are Hindus? And that they also have a religion? It is for this reason that they introduced these festivals, gatherings, celebrations and different processions. Holi, diwali, durgha puja, gun-pathi, and other such celebrations are along this line.

The distinctiveness of Islamic festivals

In comparison to this, what is the spirit, line of thought and salient feature of Islam? This can be gauged from the following incident: a Jewish scholar once went to 'Umar ﷺ and said to him:

يا أمير المؤمنين آية تقرؤونها في كتابكم لو علينا معشر اليهود نزلت لاتخذنا ذلك اليوم عيدا

"O Amîr al-Mu'minîn! There is a verse which you recite in your Book (the Qur'ân). Had it been revealed with regard to us, Jews, we would have celebrated that day as a day of festivity and a day of celebration."

'Umar ﷺ asked him: "Which verse is it?"

The Jewish scholar replied:

اَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلاَمَ دِيْنًا

"Today have I perfected for you your religion and I have completed My favour on you. And I am pleased with Islam as your religion."

This Jewish scholar knew that there was no such announcement in the Jewish Sharî'ah and in their religion that prophet-hood has ended at such and such Prophet of the Banî Isrâ'îl. The fact of the matter is that such an announcement is not found in any divine religion besides Islam – that the religion is now perfect and complete. This void was perceived by those very religions and nations. It was for this reason that someone or the other would always stand up and claim prophet-hood. Jewish and Christian historians and scholars are seen crying at this miserable situation that every day someone or the other is claiming prophet-hood. This is splitting up and dividing the Jewish and Christian societies. It is causing a major problem. So that Jewish scholar said to 'Umar ﷺ that Allâh ﷻ has conferred such a great bounty upon you whereby division and daily fighting has been put to an end forever. However, it is extremely surprising that the verse through which you received this favour and in which this announcement was made, you do not celebrate it as a day of festivity!

'Umar ﷺ gave a straightforward reply which could have only been given by a person who can take a hint and a person who was one of the greatest students of the *madrasah* of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He said: "We know fully well as to when and where this verse was revealed. It was revealed in 'Arafât on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah." 'Umar ﷺ merely said this to him. From this it became obvious that this day was a historical day and a day of remembrance from before. It is the day in which the Muslims gather and engage in the worship of Allâh ﷻ. It is also understood as to which day this verse was revealed. However, we will not make that day a day of festivity. This is because Rasûlullâh ﷺ celebrated just two *'îds* and gave just these two days of celebration to the Muslims – one is the *'îd al-fiṭr* and the other is the *'îd al-aḍḥâ*. 'Umar ﷺ said to him that in comparison to the non-Muslims, Allâh ﷻ gave us two days of celebration - one is the *'îd al-fiṭr* and the other is the *'îd al-*

aḍḥâ. It is established from this that apart from these two days, there are no other established and lawful days of celebration in Islam. It should also be borne in mind that the celebrations of non-Muslims entail play and amusement, creating an uproar, music and dancing. These celebrations of theirs are such that a person not only forgets Allâh ﷻ but even his own self. At times he even forgets his culture and morals.

On the other hand, the celebrations (*'îds*) of the Muslims are such that the *châsht ṣalâh* – let alone not being *farḍ* or *wâjib*, it is not even *sunnah mu'akkadah*. But at this very time, a new ṣalâh has been added. And this ṣalâh has been made *wâjib*. Every ṣalâh has two *takbîrs* (saying *Allâhu akbar*) – one is at the commencement of ṣalâh and the other at the time of *rukû'*. On the other hand, the *'îd ṣalâhs* have three additional *takbîrs* in each *rak'at*. What a great celebration! One ṣalâh has been added and it also has additional *takbîrs*. In addition to this, a *khuṭbah* (sermon) has also been added. This is the distinctiveness of Islamic celebrations.

The duty of 'ulamâ' and the responsibilities of madâris

It is the duty of *'ulamâ'* to check whether the Muslim masses are not doing [or committing] راعنا . It is far more serious to do [or commit] راعنا than to say راعنا . The *'ulamâ'* must check whether the mindset of the Muslims has not become such that such and such nation, such and such group is taking out the procession of such and such thing, so in comparison to them, we will take out the procession of such and such thing. This way of action is far more worse than saying راعنا . This is because راعنا is just a single word which is uttered and disappears into thin air. But when something is done in emulation of non-Muslims, it is a practical form of راعنا and the effect of it will fall on beliefs, deeds, culture and society.

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It is the duty of the *'ulamâ'* that when any such innovation (*bid'ah*), evil, and following the ways of the non-Muslims comes into the open, they should explicitly state that it has nothing to do with Islam. That it is against the spirit and teachings of Islam. Today, most of the practices that occur at the durgâhs and the mazârs (shrines and tombs of saints) are as a result of emulating the non-Muslims. The history of these practices, customs and innovations is present and recorded. From this we can gauge when and where these things started. And what the motivation behind all this was.

The spirit of Islam is worship. The spirit of Islam is turning to Allâh ﷻ. The spirit of Islam is *tauḥîd*. The spirit of Islam is simplicity. This spirit of Islam entails doing something that would benefit the doer and those around him as well. Let alone a salâh being added for the *'îd al-adhâ*, *qurbânî* (sacrificing of an animal) has also been promulgated because in the village or town there will be those who desire to eat meat. Who were unable to eat meat for several months. Today, they will eat meat to their stomach's fill. At the same time, they will also fulfil the *Sunnah* of Ibrâhîm ﷺ, Ismâ'îl ﷺ and Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

It is especially the duty of the *'ulamâ'* to keep a sharp eye and be on the look out for any subtle forms of راعنا coming into Muslim society. And the moment it comes, they must stop it in its tracks. Rasûlullâh ﷺ advised the *ummah* explicitly and clearly:

عليكم بسنتي وسنة الخلفاء الراشدين المهديين تمسكوا بها وعضوا عليها بالنواجذ

"Follow steadfastly on my *Sunnah* and the *Sunnah* of the rightly-guided *Khulafâ ar-Rashidîn* Hold on firmly to it and grasp it with your teeth."

The benefit and actual purpose and aim of our *madâris* is to create and produce custodians and night-watchmen for our Islam. If these *madâris* also join the masses in all Islamic and

un-Islamic activities, and in fact, if they begin playing a leading role in this, then this would entail a real retrogression.

Our *'ulamâ'* should also have that religious commitment and that self-respect and protection of *tauḥîd* and the *Sunnah*. Our *madâris* were established in order to produce this very class of people. They have to maintain this distinctiveness of theirs at all times.

The position of the *'ulamâ'* is a combination of steadfastness and desiring the truth

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوَّامِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ

"O believers! Forever stand up for the sake of Allâh in order to testify for justice." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 8)

Allâh ﷻ addresses the entire Muslim *ummah* and says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوَّامِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ

In other words, you should be the standard bearers of truth for the sake of Allâh ﷻ.

In our [Urdu] language and in our [Urdu] colloquial expression, the words "commandant of Allâh" are used in a sarcastic way. A person will ask in derision: "You are the commandant of Allâh!?" However, the words قَوَّامِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ are more or less similar in meaning. The hyperbolic tense of the word قَوَّامِيْنَ displays the status of this commandant of Allâh ﷻ. If the non-hyperbolic tense of this word [قَائِمِيْنَ] was used, it would probably not have given this grand status. Whether someone asks or not, whether someone calls you or not, whether someone tells you or not – you are fulfilling your responsibility. You are going everywhere.

Although this verse addresses the entire Muslim *ummah*, the *'ulamâ'* have to have a distinctive position in this regard. They have to be شهداء بالقسط – they have to be witnesses and standard bearers of the truth. If it is the duty of the Muslim *ummah* to check on the nations of the world, then it is the duty of the *'ulamâ'* to continue checking on Muslim society. They have to check from where the Muslim society is moving away from the straight path and from where it has left this straight path. Their responsibility is exactly like that of a barometer – it shows the

atmospheric pressure of every place and in every season. It gives a true testimony.

The 'ulamâ' have to be a compass

People have drawn great conclusions from small incidents and daily experiences. Shaykh Sa'dî is very proficient in this regard. In like manner, Maulânâ Rûm *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* is a king in giving examples. Both of them make very wise statements and draw very deep examples from every day incidents. I will also present a similar example of one of my admonitory lessons. You all know that I have just returned from a lengthy journey. I traveled from Delhi to Hyderabad. Allâh ﷻ alone knows how many times the train changed direction and which areas it passed through. However, the compass which is used to show the *qiblah* always showed the correct direction. This instrument neither bothered about the turning of the train nor the changing of the direction. I became extremely envious that here is a little inanimate object that is made by man, yet it is so steadfast, so dedicated, and so bound to its principles that it did not even look at how the train is changing its direction nor did it look at man (the noblest of creations) who was changing his posture all the time. At every spot, it showed the correct direction of the *qiblah*. We relied on it and offered our salâh. I was overtaken by shame and also took admonition from it. That this compass does not bother about anyone. It always shows the direction of the *qiblah*. It did not change the object of its existence. Nor did it permit any change in the fulfillment of its duty. I then thought to myself that the *'ulamâ'* of Islam actually have to be compasses. They ought to have the same steadfastness like that of the compass. Irrespective of which direction the wind is blowing in, and how much people may say, and how much people may try to influence them, their belief should be as in the words of Iqbâl (who was a great thinker, philosopher and poet):

"You must move in a single direction, irrespective of which direction the wind is blowing."

This is how the *'ulamâ'* have to be. The Muslims, among other nations, and the group of *'ulamâ'* in bearing knowledge, hold a different position and status. The Muslims have been given a *qiblah*. Irrespective of where they are, they have to turn towards this *qiblah*. The *ummah* that has been given a single *qiblah* is indirectly addressed that the *qiblah* of your hearts, the *qiblah* of all your needs, all your thought processes and efforts and endeavours – should all be the same. In other words, in your ṣalâh, the *qiblah* has to be the Ka'bah. In your deeds, actions and goals – your *qiblah* has to be the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ (who is the true being and the true object of worship).

The issue of beliefs and limits of the Sharî'ah

One is the issue of beliefs and limits of the Sharî'ah. The *'ulamâ'* fraternity has to remain like a compass in this regard. Even if the most powerful people were placed before them, they will not make any concessions to him. They will show him the correct direction. As far as beliefs and limits of the Sharî'ah are concerned, there is no room whatsoever for any concessions. Wisdom is a separate matter and flattery is another matter. There is a big difference between the two. A person can say the truth and state the fact with wisdom. He could adopt a wise approach and style:

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

"Invite towards the path of your Sustainer with wisdom and beautiful admonition."

However, there must be no flattery in this. The Qur'ân says:

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ

"They wish you would be compliant so that they may also become compliant." (Sûrah al-Qalam, verse 9)

The Messenger of Allâh ﷻ is explicitly ordered:

فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

"Proclaim openly, then, whatever you have been commanded and do not bother about the polytheists." (Sûrah al-Ḥijr, verse 94)

The completion of this sentence, viz. "do not bother about the polytheists" specifies to Rasûlullâh ﷺ where he has to openly proclaim. In other words, where there is a boundary between *tauḥîd* and polytheism, he is ordered to practise on فاصدع بما تؤمر – to openly proclaim whatever he has been commanded. There may be leniency and leeway in other matters – let that be. But with regard to *tauḥîd*, with regard to the *Sunnah*, with regard to the explicit texts of the Sharî'ah, with regard to the fundamentals of Islam – the order is فاصدع بما تؤمر . If the words فاصدع بما تؤمر were mentioned in a general sense, there could have been some concession and some leeway. However, the words وأعرض عن المشركين clearly explain the place and situation for this open proclamation. It is the duty of the *'ulamâ'* to explicitly and unambiguously proclaim the truth with regard to *tauḥîd*. However, they should do so with wisdom. It should not be as the poet Ghâlib says:

"Although he says something of worth, but he does so in a bad way."

Good words should be said in a good manner. When any trouble (*fitnah*) starts, the *'ulamâ'* should, from the very beginning, speak in a soft manner. They should resort to working gradually and with wisdom. However, in so doing, there should be no room for misinterpreting and

misunderstanding. It is by acting in this way that Islam is existing till today. Milk and water are clearly differentiated. If a person is desirous of destruction, he may fall into destruction by all means. However, he cannot criticize the Sharî'ah or those who are bearing the responsibility of the Sharî'ah.

The Muslims were not entrapped in any universal deviation

If history is studied deeply and extensively, you will learn that there was not a single year in the history of this *ummah* whereby the entire *ummah* was entrapped in any deviation. Acts of deviation were certainly found in certain places. But the entire *ummah* was not entrapped in any conspiracy or any universal deviation. A Hadîth states:

لا تجتمع أمتي على ضلالة

"My *ummah* will not be unanimous in committing an act of deviation."

On the other hand, Judaism became a target of distortion from the very beginning. Christianity fell into a new pit right from its infancy and it is continuing in it for centuries. It is for this reason that the Qur'ân refers to the Christians as الضالين – that no sooner they started walking, they fell onto the wrong road.

All praise is due to Allâh ﷻ that Islam is totally safeguarded from this. Even till today, the difference between *tauḥîd* and polytheism, the difference between *Sunnah* and *bid'ah* (innovation), the difference between Islam and ignorance, the difference between non-Muslim society and civilization and Muslim society and civilization is crystal clear.

A certain land, for some reason or the other, at a certain point in time, because of some external or internal reason may be a target of some conspiracy or may fall into some sort of corruption – this is another matter. Even in such a situation, the true *'ulamâ'* are brave enough and ready to combat this. And they continue in their endeavours to reform the situation.

The changing situation and the responsibility of *'ulamâ'*

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا، فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ، وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ، وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ، ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ.

"Then We made inheritors of the Book those whom We chose from among Our servants. There are from among them he who wrongs himself, among them he who follows a middle way, and among them he who has gone ahead with good deeds by the order of Allâh. This, indeed, is the supreme virtue." (Sûrah al-Fâṭir, verse 32)

Nothing can remain in a void

Whether it be religion, heavenly teachings, correct *da'wah*, the best of principles – none of these things can remain in a void. If together with this teaching and this *da'wah*, there are no human lives and if its bearers are not living examples, then the continuity of this cannot remain. The history of divine religions also proves this. The history of moral teachings also bears testimony to this. If this were possible, if the norm of Allâh ﷻ and the human disposition permitted this – then it would have been sufficient for scriptures to come down from the heavens, placed on protected places on mountain tops and this announcement made that the scriptures and heavenly books of Allâh ﷻ have come down. They are safely kept at a certain place. Whoever desires, may go and take them and practise on their teachings.

Instead, Allâh ﷻ first creates the Prophets. They are then commissioned. Revelation comes down to them. They are the first examples of that revelation. 'Â'ishah *raḍiyallâhu 'anhâ* was asked about the ways, pure life, mannerisms and character of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. She replied:

كان خلقه القرآن

"If you want to see the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, study the Qur'ân and see it."

Allâh ﷻ had this special relationship with Rasûlullâh ﷺ and conferred this additional bounty to him that, in the words of Shâh Walî Allâh *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Rasûlullâh's ﷺ commission as a Prophet was a double commission (*bi'thah maqrûnah*). In other words, Rasûlullâh ﷺ was commissioned for humanity. And in order to spread his teachings and to present an example to the world, the practice of an entire *ummah* was commissioned. You will therefore find that it is only for the Muslim *ummah* that the word *bi'thah* (commissioning) or another synonym to it is used. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا.

"In this way We have made you a well-balanced community so that you may be witnesses to the people and that the Messenger may be a witness to you." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 143)

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللهِ.

"You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world - you enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and you believe in Allâh." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 110)

Even more explicit words are used in the Hadîth. Rasûlullâh ﷺ addressed the Muslims and said to them:

إنما بعثتم ميسرين و لم تبعثوا معسرين

"You have been sent [and commissioned] to provide ease. You have not been sent [and commissioned] to cause difficulty."

The Sahâbah ﷺ also used similar words. You will remember that the commander of the Persian forces, Rustam, had questioned Rib'î ibn 'Âmir ﷺ who had come as an envoy for the Muslims. Rustam asked him:

ما الذي جاء بكم

"What has brought you [Muslims] over here?"

In reply to this question, Rib'î ibn Âmir ﷺ used the words of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and said:

الله ابتعثنا لنخرج من شاء من عبادة العباد إلى عبادة الله وحده

"It is Allâh ﷻ who sent us [commissioned us] so that we may remove whom He wills from the servitude of servants to the servitude of Allâh alone."

From this you should understand that no religion can remain in a void. Before religion, the prerequisite is for a Prophet. Together with the Prophet, the prerequisite is for an *ummah*. The prerequisite is for companions for that Prophet and people who have been instructed and trained by him. The best example of all this you will find in the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. This system will then have to continue forever.

The system of inheritance will remain till resurrection

From the verse which I recited before you, we learn that this system of inheritance, i.e. the deputies of the Prophets and bearers of the Book will remain till resurrection. There is therefore a very great responsibility that is placed on the heirs of the Prophets, on those who are bearing this trust and the deputies of this religion. This responsibility is with regard to Islam itself, with regard to their society and environment, with regard to their country, and with regard to the entire humanity as well. Their share is connected to the correct religion and divine teachings. This fact is expressed in a Hadîth in the following manner:

يحمل هذا العلم من كل خلف عدوله ينفون عنه تحريف الغالين وانتحال المبطلين وتأويل الجاهلين

"From every generation, there will be such just and righteous people bearing this religion – who will remove from it [this Islam] the distortion of extremists, the assumptions of the liars and the far-fetched rationalization of the ignorant."

The heirs to the Book, the deputies of the Prophets, and in simple words, the *'ulamâ'*, this is such a huge responsibility

and such a sensitive issue that if it is correctly perceived – then those on whom Allâh ﷻ bestowed this honour and on whose shoulders He placed this responsibility – then their hairs would stand on end, they would lose their sleep, the enjoyment in eating and drinking would cease and they would lose their peace forever.

The fact of the matter is that the masses' relationship with Islam, their belief in it, their confidence and reliance on it, and the continuation of correct beliefs are all confined to the life and character of those who bear this religion and those who expound on it, i.e. on the *'ulamâ'*.

What impact can their [*'ulamâ'*] slightest mistake have? How weak can this relationship become that is between the *ummah* and Islam? Their moral weakness, the moral degeneration of this fraternity, base character, hankering after this world, hankering after wealth, sanctifying power and authority, submitting before desires of the soul and personal benefits, causing division and discord – what effect will all this have on society and how it can shake and affect this entire generation - if this is correctly perceived and realized, then let alone the edifices of our *madâris* trembling, even our mosques and pulpits will tremble. No one can portray this reality better than the Hadîth of Rasûlullâh ﷺ:

ألا إن في الجسد مضغة إذا صلحت صلح الجسد كله وإذا فسدت فسد الجسد كله، ألا وهي القلب.

> "Remember! There is piece of flesh in the body, if it is set right, the entire body will be set right. If it is spoilt, the entire body will be spoilt. Remember! It is the heart."

The position of the *'ulamâ'* in society is exactly like that of the heart in the human body. Their corruption and disorder and their righteousness and equity will have that exact effect on the *ummah* and society just as the order and disorder of the heart has on the rest of the body.

The responsibility rests with the entire 'ulamâ' fraternity

This responsibility is not confined to a particular group or a specific institution. It is the responsibility of the entire *'ulamâ'* fraternity. When there is moral degeneration in the heirs of the Book, when hankering after the world comes into them, when their connection with Allâh ﷻ becomes weak, when they transgress the limits which even the masses were not supposed to transgress, then not only with the entire society become corrupt, but it will stink and give off an offensive odour. The future of religion is connected to the people of religion and the people of knowledge. The moral, human and religious future of a land and its people is connected to the bearers of religion and the leaders of religion [the *'ulamâ'*]. Now if any weakness comes into the religious leaders, then no power on earth can save the masses if their connection with their religion is gone weak. No wisdom, no intelligence, no lecturing and no politics can save them. So much so, even if an Islamic government resolves that corruption should not come into this society and that its connection with religion should not become weak, it will not succeed in this.

This is exactly like that little instrument that controls the speed and direction of a ship. If its needle were to move by even a hair's breadth, the ship will shift away from its destination by thousands of miles. The *'ulamâ'* fraternity is in fact a compass for the *ummah*. It is therefore necessary for them to remain correct and true, and to continue doing their job. If the connection of the *'ulamâ'* with Allâh ﷻ is correct, if sincerity and character is found in them, if they are prepared and engrossed in fulfilling their duties, if they have those lofty qualities which have to be found in the deputies of the Prophets and the heirs of the Book, then the least is that the future of this religion is safeguarded in this land. But if this is not the case, then no plan and no scheme can save this religion in this land.

The responsibility of Muslims in India

وَلاَ تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلاَحِهَا

"Do not cause corruption in the land after its reformation." (Sûrah al-A'râf, verse 85)

After reformation, do not spread corruption

The Prophet of Allâh, Shu'ayb ﷺ said this to his people. (In reality, he conveyed the message of all other Messengers and the divine message of Allâh ﷻ). He said: O my people! Do not cause corruption and destruction in the land of Allâh ﷻ after its reformation." These words of his are so simple. Yet they are full of meaning, so deep, and so immersed in pain. Generally it is said: Brothers! Do not cause corruption. Do not cause discord. Do not spread confusion. But Shu'ayb ﷺ said:

وَلاَ تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلاَحِهَا

"Do not cause corruption in the land after its reformation." (Sûrah al-A'râf, verse 85)

When the land of Allâh ﷻ, when in any land of His, the pivot of society, culture and human life has been placed, when it is brought to its place, when the relationship of humanity has been established with Allâh ﷻ, when relationships between fellow humans have been set right, when the rights of others are recognized and one's own responsibilities have been accepted, when the lessons of respect for human life and wealth and fair dealing have been delivered, when a large number of people – and in some places when an entire population – has accepted Allâh ﷻ, then do not pour water over all these endeavours and efforts. This tree of reformation has been irrigated with sweat and blood. Your families, your honour and your reputation has been put at stake for all this. You have turned a blind eye to all the benefits of this world. You have been reminded about one single fact – that people be taught to live like humans and as

servants of Allâh ﷻ on this earth. Just as the beads of a rosary and the pearls of a necklace are beaded together, individuals of the human progeny have been beaded together in the string of human brotherhood.

كلكم من آدم وآدم من تراب

"O people! You are all the progeny of Âdam ﷺ. And Âdam ﷺ was created from soil."

For Allâh's sake, do not break this string or else all these beads will get scattered.

There is a lot of pain and a throbbing of the heart in these words of Shu'ayb ﷺ. For centuries upon centuries, the Prophets taught man the lesson of humanity. They have taught man to live like a human. They said: there is no praise for you if you can swim in the oceans like fish, fly in the air like birds, roar like lions, or tear apart like hyenas. Your praise and your honour lies in walking on this earth like servants of Allâh ﷻ. The earth belongs to Allâh ﷻ. You belong to Allâh ﷻ. From where, then, has this rebelliousness come?

Shu'ayb ﷺ did not say: ولا تفسدوا في الأرض بعد صلاحها – do not cause corruption in the land after it has come right. Rather, he used the word إصلاح . This is a transitive word. In order to bring about a reformation, you need a reformer, you need a *da'wah* (a call), you need endeavour, you need divine inspiration (*taufîq*). All these factors are included in this word. The history of prophethood is also included. When the Prophets of Allâh ﷻ and the doctors of humanity turned this land into a piece of paradise with their blessed endeavours – then man became ready to give his life for man, thieves became guards and animals of prey became domesticated. Such examples of sacrifice and self-denial came to the fore, that were it not for the reliable

testimony of history, it would have been difficult to believe them.[1]

A great crime in the sight of Allâh ﷻ

A great crime in the sight of Allâh ﷻ, and a great injustice in the eyes of the Prophets and reformers is that in any society wherein the destiny of each individual is bound to that of the other, be completely discarded because of personal motives or due to shortsightedness. If there is any evil in any society or country, and a person thinks that how can it harm him, that if in a particular district, family or certain area of a city, or certain city in the country – if humans are killing each other, if peoples houses are being burnt, if travellers are being attacked – then what is there to be worried about? In our limited circle there is no such thing happening. I have not found a better example of the consequence of this line of thinking – not in moral literature nor in any literature – than that of an authentic Hadîth of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Rasûlullâh ﷺ said that there are passengers on a ship which has two levels – an upper level and a lower level. (This too is also a miracle of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. As far as I know, ship building had not made such progress whereby ships had a first class and a deck class. Even if it had progressed to this extent, we are talking about the Arabian peninsula which is as good as not

[1] For example, in one of the wars during the era of the *Khulafâ' Râshidûn*, a wounded soldier was offered water. When he was about to drink it, he heard another person crying out for water. He said to his brother that he should go and give it to that person. On reaching this second person, a third person cried out for water. The second one asked him to go and give it to him. By the time he reached there, the third person died. So he returned to the second person, only to find that he had also passed away. So he goes to the first person, only to find him dead as well. And the water remained just like that – not drunk by anyone.

having no ocean at all. And the area of the Hijâz [where Rasûlullâh ﷺ born and brought up] was even more unsuited to travel by ship). So there are some passengers on the upper deck whom we could refer to as the upper class. And there are some on the lower deck which generally comprises of poor people. Arrangements have been made for sweet drinking water. More consideration is generally given to those of the upper class. Those of the lower deck are forced to go up for water. They go and bring this water. Water, by nature, is constantly in motion. Moreover, a ship is something that moves and is constantly in motion. Despite numerous precautions, water still falls and spills. The water does not know that a certain wealthy person is sitting here or a certain nobleman's clothes have got wet. This happens once, it happens several times. The passengers of the upper class cannot bear this any longer and they say: "Hey! We cannot stand to see this any longer. You come for the water while we are put into discomfort!? We will now not allow you to take water from here. You can make your own arrangements." The people of the lower deck reply: "We cannot live without water. If we are not allowed to bring it from the upper class, we will make a hole in the bottom and we will be able to fill water without any difficulty at all. We will not have to be indebted to anyone any longer. We will not have to praise and thank anyone any more."

Rasûlullâh ﷺ says that if those passengers of the upper deck still have some sense left and they have not met with disaster as yet, they will try and flatter these people of the lower deck. They will hold their hands and say to them: "No brother. You rather come and take water from the top. For Allâh's sake, do not make a hole in the bottom of the ship. If not, the ship will sink. It will take everyone with it and sink. Neither will the upper class passengers nor the lower deck passengers be saved."

It seems that me, you, all of us have to live our lives in this country. However, this is a ship of human civilization or the ship of human society. And we are all passengers of one ship. If we only bothered about our own selves and made arrangements for sweet water in our own homes, then there is no good in this. What is that sweet water that I am talking about? It is that we fulfil our own needs and ensure that our own tasks are fulfilled. We then do not bother about others. This way of thinking is synonymous to making a hole in the ship. How many holes are being made in the ship of our country today! Each person is looking at his limited objective. He has shut his eyes from others. He has forgotten what effect this is having on society. This is a plague that has not only struck India but the entire world.

At present, it is the responsibility of the Muslims to stand up and save the country from destruction. This is not the responsibility of the government alone. It has numerous other complications and political expediencies to worry about. In the light of the Qur'ân, it is your duty that you do not allow water to be poured over the endeavours and efforts of the true callers towards Islam, the well-wishers of humanity, and the sincere constructors of the country and the society. You should continue conveying the message of

وَلاَ تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلاَحِهَا

"Do not cause corruption in the land after its reformation." (Sûrah al-A'râf, verse 85)

You will be questioned by Allâh ﷻ that how did this country get destroyed in your presence? You ought to have offered such an example that people realize that money alone is not everything. That position alone is not everything. That honour alone is not everything. The basis of everything is the fear of Allâh ﷻ. And thereafter, love and well-being for the creation.

I have full conviction that you will present this example and thereby attain the pedestal of love. And that leadership of this country will be handed over to you.

The purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ân and the responsibilities of those who bear it

هُوَ الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ، وَإِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلَالٍ مُّبِيْنٍ.

"It is He who raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom. And before this they were lying in manifest error." (Sûrah al-Jumu'ah, verse 2)

Everything that is related to the word of Allâh ﷻ [the Qur'ân] - be it memorization, correct rules of recitation (*tajwîd*), *tafsîr*, or general recitation of the Qur'ân – are all very honourable and respected. Allâh ﷻ says with regard to Rasûlullâh ﷺ himself, and together with this, with regard to the duties and responsibilities of the mantle of prophet-hood:

"It is He who raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom. And before this they were lying in manifest error." (Sûrah al-Jumu'ah, verse 2)

The mantle of prophet-hood and its task

Rasûlullâh's ﷺ mantle of prophet-hood has four departments which, so to speak, are four incumbent duties.

Recitation of the verses is the first duty and the first department. This is such an important thing and such a lofty duty that Allâh ﷻ mentioned it first from among the departments of the mantle of prophet-hood.

The second department is that of purifying the souls, training them, culturing them, removing evil characteristics, creating noble characteristics, and to create in them that attribute which is mentioned at an another place in the Qur'ân:

وَلٰكِنَّ اللهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الإِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ، وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ، أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُوْنَ.

"However, Allâh placed the love of îmân in your hearts and beautified it in your hearts, and placed the repugnance of unbelief, sinning and disobedience in your hearts. It is such who are on the path of virtue." (Sûrah al-Hujurât, verse 7)

An important purpose of revealing the Qur'ân

The coming down or revelation of the Qur'ân does not mean that it comes down in the form of letters and words, that it is recorded in book form and then safeguarded in the hearts so that people may be able to recite it and make others listen to it. That they learn it and continue reciting it. No. Instead, an extremely important purpose of revealing the Qur'ân is that beliefs are put right, the hearts and souls are reformed. Rasûlullâh ﷺ fulfilled and completed both these duties. The Sahâbah ﷺ were living proof of this effort of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. How purified their souls had become! How they were trained that the repugnance of unbelief and polytheism was firmly embedded in their hearts. The love of îmân and the spirit of self-denial was deeply rooted in them. The desire for worship had completely overtaken them. The passion to serve the creation became their hallmark. The thorns of personal gain had been removed from them. When the world became completely insignificant before them, when the desire for position and authority came to a complete end – then every single Sahâbî was a living example of Rasûlullâh's ﷺ position as a purifier – يُزَكِّيْهِمْ – purifying them.

Dirâr ibn 'Amr ﷺ is a Sahâbî. He says: "When I was still a polytheist I left with the intention of doing something which the Quraysh could not do, viz. to put an end to Rasûlullâh's ﷺ life. It was an ideal opportunity. He was making *tawâf* of the Ka'bah all alone. I also commenced the *tawâf* and remained in this thought that the moment I get the opportunity, I will fulfill

my task. Rasûlullâh ﷺ saw me and called me. I went to him. He smiled and placed his hand on my chest. I take an oath by Allâh ﷻ, that before he could even raise his hand from my chest, all the dirt and filth that was within me had come out. Thereafter, I went home. There was a woman who used to conduct a gathering and attract many people towards her. Stories and tales used to be related in this gathering of hers. I used to be a drunkard. When this woman saw me, she called out to me. I replied: 'Now, nothing can happen. I have now become a Muslim.'" There are numerous other incidents of this nature where people underwent an immediate transformation.

'Amr ibn al-'Âṣ ؓ says: "I went through three different stages in my life. One stage was when there was not a single person in this entire universe who was more abhorred in my sight than Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I seek refuge in Allâh ﷻ that had I got the opportunity at that time, I would have destroyed by destiny [by killing Rasûlullâh ﷺ]. Allâh ﷻ was kind to me in that I did not find such an opportunity. The second stage was when there was not a single person in this entire universe who was more beloved in my sight than Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I take an oath by Allâh ﷻ that I could not even look at Rasûlullâh ﷺ full in the face. If someone were to ask me to describe Rasûlullâh's ﷺ physical features, I would not be able to do so because my eyes could not remain focused on his blessed face. I did not even have the courage to look at him. When I pledged my allegiance to him [gave him the *bay'ah*] and placed my hand in his hand, I could not even remove my hand. Rasûlullâh ﷺ asked me: 'Why are you not leaving my hand?' I replied: 'O Rasûlullâh! First tell me of what is going to happen about my past sins. I am a very sinful person.' He replied: 'Don't you know that embracing Islam wipes out all past sins?'"

There are many examples of this nature. You know very well the incident regarding Waḥshî ؓ who had martyred Ḥamzah ؓ, the lion of Allâh ﷻ, and mutilated his body. When Waḥshî

ؓ came before Rasûlullâh ﷺ with the intention of pledging allegiance to him Rasûlullâh ﷺ accepted it. He read the *kalimah* and embraced Islam. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said to him: "O Waḥshî! If you do not come in front of me, it will be better because when I see you, I think of my uncle [Ḥamzah ؓ]." This is a natural response and a very intricate emotion. It shows the highest degree of perception and humanity. But when he embraced Islam, it caused such a revolution within him and such spirituality inside him that the greatest of saints and sages of today are envious of him. This is the very Waḥshî ؓ who killed Musaylamah, the imposter.

When I read this incident I see it thus: look at Waḥshî ؓ that he was chosen to deprive Islam and the Muslims of a personality [Ḥamzah ؓ] who was a great support to Islam and extremely beloved by Rasûlullâh ﷺ. In order to make up and payback for this, Allâh ﷻ chose a person who was the most abhorred in the sight of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. One was the person who was a great defender and helper of prophet-hood. The other was he who came as a contender of prophet-hood [Musaylamah, the imposter]. Allâh ﷻ chose the best avenger for this [i.e. He chose Waḥshî ؓ to kill Musaylamah, the imposter]. The soul of Rasûlullâh ﷺ must have certainly been pleased with this. All this was the result of the strength of Waḥshî's îmân.

These are a few examples of immediate change and immediate revolution in people. As for the transformation that took place in the Saḥâbah ؓ through the training and companionship of Rasûlullâh ﷺ - this caused them to go from one level to another level. They went from moral degeneration, disintegration of deeds, the darkness of incorrect beliefs and ignorance to the lofty position of spirituality, îmân, morality, nurturing and knowledge.

Teaching the Book

The third department is that of teaching the Book and wisdom. In other words, teaching the Qur'ân. The *qârî* first recites the Qur'ân. Thereafter purification takes place. This includes *tafsîr* of the Qur'ân, expounding on its facts, demonstrating its sciences, explaining and detailing the Qur'ânic objectives and goals – all this is included. This is the meaning of:

يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

"teaching them the Book and wisdom"

Then there is also the need to create a deep understanding in the students of the Qur'ân, in those who bear it and those who listen to it. This is inferred from the following Hadîth:

من يرد الله به خيرا يفقّه في الدين

"The person for whom Allâh ﷻ desires good, He gives him a deep understanding of Islam."

This in essence are the four-pronged duties and responsibilities of he [Rasûlullâh ﷺ] who bore the Qur'ân. These were his excellent qualities and his life. Thereafter there were those *'ulamâ'* from among the Sahâbah ﷺ whose knowledge Rasûlullâh ﷺ himself praised and regarding whom he asked others to refer to. For example, Ubayy ibn Ka'b ﷺ whom Rasûlullâh ﷺ praised a lot and regarding whom he said that he had a special affinity with the Qur'ân. Zayd ibn Thâbit ﷺ was a scribe of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and he used to record the divine revelation. He was a great scholar of the Qur'ân. Rasûlullâh ﷺ personally praised the Qur'ân recitation of 'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ûd ﷺ. 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib ﷺ was also a great scholar of the Qur'ân. Rasûlullâh ﷺ made the following supplication in favour of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbâs ﷺ:

اللهم علمه الكتاب وفقهه في الدين

"O Allâh! Give him knowledge of the Book and give him a deep understanding of Islam."

These personalities had these four qualities. That is, they were reciters of the Qur'ân, they taught the Book, they taught wisdom, and they also purified the souls.

Then came the era of the Tâbi'în. There were many among them who also possessed these four qualities. For example, I can take the name of Hasan al-Basrî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* who had all these four departments in his life. Similar was the case with Sa'îd ibn Jubayr *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Muhammad ibn Sîrîn *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* and Sa'îd ibn Musayyib *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. These are those prominent Tâbi'în who were living examples of these four departments. Even among the Tab' Tâbi'în there were numerous personalities who possessed these four qualities. For example, the four imâms, the Traditionalists (*Muhaddithûn*), the jurists (*fuqahâ'*), the Sufis. There was Fudayl ibn 'Iyâd *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Ma'rûf Karkhî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Imâm Ahmad ibn Hambal *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Junayd Baghdâdî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. They all possessed these four qualities.

Thereafter came an era of decline. These departments began to be distributed. This resulted in different groups in the *ummah*, each group paying attention to a particular department. Some of them made recitation of the Qur'ân their salient feature. They memorized the Qur'ân and paid particular attention to the rules of recitation. They considered reciting with perfection to be their incumbent duty. May Allâh ﷻ reward them on behalf of the *ummah* because they fulfilled a very important obligation in protecting the recitation of the Qur'ân just as Allâh ﷻ sent it down to Rasûlullâh ﷺ, Abû Bakr ﷺ compiled it into book form, 'Uthmân ﷺ made copies of it and sent it to the different centres of Islam.

Some people made teaching of the Book and wisdom their salient feature. This is that group of *'ulamâ'* who concerned themselves with the outward – who explained the mysteries of

the Qur'ân and Hadîth, who proliferated their themes and explained their difficult sections.

Purification and training

Some people undertook the responsibility of purification. They are the Sufis who undertook the responsibility of purification and training of their *murîds* (disciples) and of others who used to refer to them for their matters. In so doing, they established an entire system of culturing the soul, teaching morality and reforming the inner-self. By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, their number is so large that it is difficult to count them. As an example, the following were great Sufis in their times: 'Abdul Qâdr Jaylânî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Khwâjah Bahâ' ad-Dîn Naqshbandî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Khwâjah Mu'în ad-Dîn Chistî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* and Shihâb ad-Dîn Suhrawardî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*.

Thereafter, those who took up the work of *sulûk* (treading the path to Allâh ﷻ) were largely responsible for removing innovations and distortions. Bearing in mind the dispositions of their respective eras, they renewed the prophetic medicine. Specific mention has to be made of Shaykh Imâm Rabbânî Mujaddid Alf Thânî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. After them came Shâh Walî Allâh Dehlawî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Sayyid Ahmad Shahîd *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, Maulânâ Rashîd Ahmad Gangohî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* and Maulânâ Ashraf 'Alî Thânwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. These are the people who renewed and rejuvenated the science of *sulûk*, composed it according to their times and proliferated its benefits among the masses.

The responsibilities of those who bear the Qur'ân

In essence, the responsibility of the bearer of the Qur'ân is not mere recitation of it, memorizing it properly, reciting it

correctly, reciting it in a gathering or assembly. Rather, he bears a very great responsibility. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

"That person will be punished – he to whom Allâh ﷻ gave knowledge of the Qur'ân and he remained sleeping at night to such an extent that he even missed his *fajr salâh*."

The Qur'ân is a very great responsibility – in memorizing it, in remembering it and in practising on it. The battle of Yamâmah was a very severe battle among the Islamic battles. It was a very heavy and tumultuous battle. People were dying in large numbers and there was no decisive result. A Sahâbî screamed out and said: "O you who are bearers of the Qur'ân and you who have the Qur'ân in your hearts! Practise on the Qur'ân today and sacrifice yourselves for the Qur'ân because if this sedition and apostasy is not put to an end, it will be difficult for the Qur'ân to exist." Those who were *huffâz* advanced forward and fought selflessly. They spread onto the battlefield like butterflies. Allâh ﷻ says:

فِيْ صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِيْ سَفَرَةٍ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ

"It is recorded in honoured pages. Exalted and extremely pure. By the hands of scribes, who are extremely noble and most virtuous." (Sûrah 'Abasa, verses 13-16)

From this verse we learn that the bearers of the Qur'ân should portray a picture of كرام برزة – who are extremely noble and most virtuous. Allâh ﷻ says that the bearers of the Qur'ân are actually in the line of the angels. In fact, we learn that those who take the courage of bearing the Qur'ân and safeguarding it in their hearts should have these qualities.

لاَ يَمَسُّهُ إِلاَّ الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ

"None but those who are purified shall touch it."

It is the will of Allâh ﷻ that only the purified should touch this Qur'ân. Those who memorized the Qur'ân from the Sahâbah ﷺ

and those who had knowledge of the Qur'ân – they surpassed others in their character, piety and worship. It is for this reason that when the corpses of the martyrs were about to be buried after the battle of Uhud, Rasûlullâh ﷺ asked for those who had memorized the Qur'ân the most to be buried first. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

يؤمكم من أقراكم

"The one who recites the best should be your imam in ṣalâh."

So this does not mean that a person should be just a *ḥâfiẓ* and nothing else. Rather, he should have more knowledge of the Qur'ân. My purpose in saying this is that the *ḥâfiẓ* has a very great responsibility.

The Qur'ân is the greatest wealth

What I am saying to you is that you should think over the fact that the word of Allâh ﷻ is in your heart. This is divine knowledge. This is the greatest knowledge – علم أعظم . People are hankering after the greatest name of Allâh ﷻ - اسم أعظم while you have علم أعظم in your heart. This علم أعظم also contains the اسم أعظم . You are therefore the bearer of علم أعظم and اسم أعظم . In mentioning the virtue of the Qur'ân, Rasûlullâh ﷺ said: "You will be rewarded tenfold for every letter. I do not say that الم is one letter. Rather, ا is on letter, ل is one letter, and م is one letter." Rasûlullâh ﷺ also said:

خيركم من تعلم القرآن وعلمه

"The best of you is he who learns the Qur'ân and teaches it."

Look at the numerous virtues of the Qur'ân. If a person recites 30 parts of the Qur'ân, he does this in the holy month of Ramaḍân, he recites it in the mosque, he recites it in the nights

of Ramaḍân, and then takes a few hundred rupees as a reward! This is extremely astonishing that a person can be prepared to do this. There is the story of a pious person that one day he was overtaken by emotion and he said: "I take an oath by Allâh ﷻ that if someone were to offer me an entire country and tells me to take the entire kingdom, but give me the reward for saying "Allâh" just once, I take an oath that I will not be prepared to do this." Every letter of the Qur'ân is the speech of Allâh ﷻ. The most valuable thing in this world and which has a direct connection with Allâh ﷻ is the Qur'ân. The greatest wealth under this sky is the Qur'ân. This is because it is attributed to Allâh ﷻ. It is the speech of Allâh ﷻ. It is referred to as *kalâm-e-qadîm*. In other words, Allâh ﷻ is the speaker and this [Qur'ân] is His speech. There can never be anything greater than this. You [*ḥâfiẓ*] therefore have to value your own self. You should realize what wealth you have. If only you realize what wealth you have, your feet will not even touch the ground. You will have no consideration whatsovever for the wealth of any wealthly person in your heart. If you have such consideration, you should seek forgiveness a thousand times – that I have the Qur'ân in my heart, I have the entire speech of Allâh ﷻ in my chest, yet I am looking up to this businessman and this minister?!!!

Ḥâfiẓ Ibn Taymîyyah *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* used to say: "What harm can my enemy inflict upon me? My paradise is in my heart. What can he snatch away from me? I am walking about with my paradise. The speech of Allâh ﷻ the knowledge of Allâh ﷻ is in my heart. By garden is with me. How can my enemy imprison me. I am totally free. Wherever I live, I will be free."

Respect is necessary in order to develop spirituality

How is it that one person can develop so much of spirituality and make such progress while another person cannot do so?

The difference between the two is only in respect and attaching greatness to something. The Book in itself is great and honourable. However, to constantly have its greatness in the mind is necessary. Shâh Muḥammad Ya'qûb Mujaddidî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* was a king in giving examples. He used to give astonishing examples. He says that for something to be present is one thing, and to have knowledge of its presence is another thing. Nawâb Maḥbûb 'Alî Khân was the ruler of Deccan. It was his habit to occasionally change his appearance and walk about in the city. He did this on one occasion and sat down in a horse-cart. Another person also sat with him. They began talking. The Nawâb asked him about the latest news. The person could not recognize who was speaking to him. He replied that these days all the people in the lanes and alleys are spitting at our Nawâb, Maḥbûb 'Alî Khân and they are speaking ill of him. He also narrated some story about the Nawâb and said several other things about him. The Nawâb continued sitting and listening to all this. He then took out a cigarette and asked the person if he had a light. He replied in the affirmative. It was a dark night. He took out his matches and struck one. No sooner he did this, he recognized the person as being the Nawâb. He immediately froze and began trembling. The Nawâb put him at rest.

The elders of our religion are able to draw big conclusions from small incidents. Shâh Muḥammad Ya'qûb Mujaddidî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* said: the Nawâb was the same Nawâb who came and sat on that horse-cart. He was the same Nawâb when he asked for some news. When this person replied, the Nawâb was the same Nawâb. But when he struck the match and saw his face, did the Nawâb change? Why was he overcome by fear and dread? He was present from the very beginning, but he acquired knowledge of his presence only now.

The Qur'ân is the very same which came down over 1400 years ago. The Qur'ân that you recited in your infancy, the Qur'ân

that you recited in your youth, the Qur'ân that you are reciting in your old or will recite in your old age, the Qur'ân that you recite in your *tahajjud ṣalâh*, the Qur'ân which you recite – is still the same Qur'ân. Not even a single dot has been added to it. However, no sooner you realized that this is the word of Allâh ﷻ, it is the word of that Allâh ﷻ who possesses such and such attributes, it is the speech that has such qualities – then there is a big difference in your previous state of mind and your present state of mind.

Allâh ﷻ says:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلٰى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللهِ

"Had We revealed this Qur'ân upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, rendered asunder by the fear of Allâh." (Sûrah al-Ḥashr, verse 21)

اَللهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ، تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُوْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُوْدُهُمْ وَقُلُوْبُهُمْ إِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللهِ.

"Allâh revealed the best speech, a Book, in unison with itself and oft-repeated. [Whereat] the hairs stand on end on the skins of those who fear their Sustainer. Thereafter, their skins and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allâh." (Sûrah az-Zumar, verse 23)

We thus learn that we have to develop two qualities, one is respect for the speech [Qur'ân] and respect for the speaker [Allâh ﷻ]. The other is that we should have conviction that we are being rewarded for our intention. It is these two things through which a person can reach the highest stages of proximity to Allâh ﷻ - *maqâm-e-wilâyat*.

The Qur'ân is the greatest means of acquiring proximity to Allâh ﷻ

Some scholars say that the final stage of *sulûk* is the Qur'ân. This is acquired through reciting the Qur'ân in optional (*nafl*) ṣalâh. When a *sâlik* (person who is treading the path of *sulûk*) passes all the stages through *dhikr* – the remembrance of Allâh

ﷻ - he acquires the final stage of proximity to Allâh ﷻ through excessive recitation of the Qur'ân. Maulânâ Fadlur Rahmân Ganj Murâdabâdî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* says that the proximity that is acquired through recitation of the Qur'ân cannot be acquired in any other way. This proximity is acquired through presence of mind, respect [for the Qur'ân] and full conviction in being rewarded. Continue reciting and continue having this conviction that you are being rewarded. For every letter and every line, you are being rewarded tenfold. You should have more desire for this in your heart – that the more you recite, the more you will be rewarded. My fellow brothers! If you develop this quality within you, there will be life and spirit in your recitation of the Qur'ân.

It is a sin to recite the Qur'ân as a job

If you make this Qur'ân your means of acquiring livelihood, then it is far better for a person to make this world his means of livelihood. On the day of resurrection, those who acquired lawful sustenance and livelihood, and who engaged in lawful businesses will be far ahead of those "religious" *qârîs*, *huffâz* and *'ulamâ'* who used this religion as a means to fill their stomachs and to earn of this world. There will be numerous *auliyâ'* (close friends of Allâh ﷻ) from among the businessmen who believe that they are engrossed in this world merely to bring up their children and fill their stomachs. While in their businesses they engaged in the remembrance of Allâh ﷻ, they offered their salâh, they continuously feared Allâh ﷻ, they continued seeking His forgiveness. They will be far better than many *'ulamâ'* and *huffâz* who made this Qur'ân and this Hadîth solely to earn a livelihood.

Suhbah (companionship) and endeavour are both needed in order to benefit from the Qur'ân

If Allâh ﷻ has given you this wealth [of the Qur'ân], you should also try to infuse it with spirit, fear of Allâh ﷻ and piety. This is not achieved without companionship and endeavour. You also have to put an effort to remember the Qur'ân, to put life into it and to create a balance in your life. If you spent two years in memorizing the Qur'ân, then the truth is that you should spend four years. This is because they are just words which the unbelievers and believers – all can read. Without doubt, it is difficult for the unbelievers to memorize it, but they can do so. Even now, there are so many non-Muslims in Egypt and Syria who know the Qur'ân. The author of *al-Munjid* (an Arabic dictionary) was a Christian but he was a *hâfiz* of the Qur'ân. So in order to firmly establish and embed the meanings of the Qur'ân and the sciences of the Qur'ân, it will be necessary for you to spend time and put in full effort in order to set right your character.

On once occasion, I was traveling with Maulânâ Muhammad Ilyâs *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* by train. I said to him: "Hazrat, during this journey, the things which I learn about the Qur'ân and which I begin to understand – I cannot do so at home." On hearing this he became very pleased and addressed the others saying: "Have you heard what Maulânâ is saying. This is in fact the truth."

The people who understood the Qur'ân while in the field of jihâd, those who understood it while in the field of service, those who understood it in the different fields of endeavour – we cannot acquire their understanding by reading and studying the Qur'ân over here.

In order to gain affinity with the Qur'ân, there is the need for much toiling and hard work. May Allâh ﷻ inspire you with the ability to respect the Qur'ân, to practise on it, to take enjoyment from it, and to gain proximity with Him through it. Âmîn.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PROPHET OF MERCY AND THE HOLY LANDS

The system of the world is neither bound to governments, nor organizations nor military power. It is neither bound to moral philosophies, cultures and centres of learning. The system of the world is bound to [where our eyes cannot reach], to the House of Allâh ﷻ and the call on which it was founded. The first inviter towards this call and towards this house was Ibrâhîm ﷺ. The final caller, the seal, the perfecter and the protector of it is Muhammad ﷺ. The House of Allâh ﷻ and the Musjid-e-Nabawî are both representing this call.

Maulânâ Sayyid Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

The most beloved word of all

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِيْنَ

"We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds." (Sûran al-Ambiyâ, verse 107)

Under the canopy of this sky and on the surface of this earth, if we had to make the sun a candle and the moon a lamp and then ask this question: what is the most beloved word of all? Then I think and I can clearly claim that everyone would reply: it is **mercy**.

One thing regarding which no one in this world complains of, regarding which no one is a plaintiff, no one criticizes, regarding which no one can claim of being harmed by and no one can claim of being injured by – is nothing but a merciful heart, is nothing but mercy.

Everyone is in need of mercy

Who is there who can say – whether he is an opponent or an ally, whether he is a conqueror or the conquered, whether he is an ignorant person or a learned person, whether he is an affluent and intelligent person, whether he belongs to a backward nation or an advanced nation – that he does not need mercy, that he rejects mercy, that he does not want mercy? There is a time when a person does not need power and he does not need knowledge, but there is no time whatsoever when a person does not need mercy. Every single person is in need of mercy and everyone is appreciative of it.

There is no shortage in the treasures of Allâh. Was it not possible for Allâh to say: "We have sent you [O Muhammad] as a conqueror of the world"? A conqueror whose followers established the greatest empire of the world, who hoisted the flag of success in the east, west, south and north. Even if the flag of their government did not blow [at any place] and even if

their coins were not circulated [at any place], the love that the followers of Muhammad ﷺ had for him encompassed the entire world. A poet has rightly said: "The one who conquers the hearts, he is in fact the conqueror of that era."

[If we had to consider] the culture that was spread by Muhammad ﷺ, the sciences that he produced, the seas of knowledge that he caused to flow, the fountains of love that he caused to gush forth, then it is absolutely correct to say that he is the greatest conqueror of humanity, the greatest teacher of ethics, and the greatest teacher [in general]. Had Allâh said: "O Muhammad! We have sent you as the reformer and teacher of the world", no corner of the world would have said: "We have a doubt in this." All the scholars, philosophers, thinkers, historians and critics would have submissively said: "We believe this to be true and we attest to it. Without any doubt, you are the greatest reformer and teacher of the world."

Allâh could have said:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ مُعَلِّمًا لِّلْعَالَمِيْنَ

"We have not sent you but as a teacher to the worlds."

In like manner, there could have been various other attributes [for Muhammad ﷺ]. However, the word that could encompass all the attributes of Muhammad ﷺ and the task with which he was sent – its essence could only be encompassed by the words: "We have not sent you but as a **mercy** to the worlds."

The attribute of mercy is a beloved attribute of Allâh. He commenced Sûrah al-Fâtihah with this attribute. This attribute is foremost in *bismillâh* as well. [Allâh commences the Qur'ân thus]: In the name of Allâh who is extremely beneficent, most merciful. All praise is due to Allâh, the Sustainer of the worlds. The beneficent, the merciful."

Allâh says: "My mercy encompasses everything." The thing that the world received from Muhammad ﷺ, the present which it received, the gift which it received, the life which it received – there could have been no better word for it: "We have not sent you but as a **mercy** to the worlds."

The most important, the most fundamental, the most honourable, the most beloved, and the most abundant thing which every tribe, every stratum of humanity, every country and every nation received in abundance from Muhammad ﷺ was mercy. It was through him that the doors of Allâh's mercy opened and the entire humanity became "lush and green". A poet says: "Neither was the land and the water deprived of it. The entire garden of Allâh became green with it."

Rasûlullâh ﷺ was merciful to the males, he was merciful to the females, he was merciful to the slaves, he was merciful to the poor, and he was even merciful to the animals. If I were to enumerate all his favours [and acts of mercy] to you, the entire night will not be enough. If you were to study and Qur'ân and the books of his biography, you will learn that every stratum of life is indebted to his kindness and mercy.

The one who prohibited us from oppression, who commanded us to pay the labourer before his sweat dries, who promised the honest businessmen proximity to the Prophets [in paradise], who explained the virtues of rearing an orphan, who instructed us to fulfil the rights of women, who made the slaves equal in rank to their masters, who wiped out the distinctions on the basis of colour and race, who treated the prisoners [of war] with mercy – he is the mercy to the worlds. You will find this mercy in every facet of his life. [When sending the Muslims in jihâd], he instructed the soldiers not to harm the injured, not to touch the worshippers and ascetics, not to inflict any harm on the women and children, not to burn [or uproot] fruit-bearing trees

and lush and green orchards, and not to damage the places of worship of any people.

His entire being is a mercy. Whether the modern world and the present human race believe in him as a Prophet or not, every single one of them are under the shade of his mercy. All are indebted to his favours.

In the sixth century of the Christian era, the entire humanity had lost its footing. The countries that were inhabited by humans had become a jungle of animals. The big fish were swallowing the small ones. The strong were devouring the weak. The masses were living for slavery and servitude while the kings and leaders were living for luxuries and enjoyment. If you were to read "The history of the fall of the Roman Empire" or "The moral history of Europe" you would see the scenes of oppression, bloodshed, and luxury and enjoyment. In the feasts of the affluent, the bodies of the poor were burnt and used as a display of lights. Human bodies were used as lanterns and torches. While a few wealthy people remained engrossed in their businesses and riches, the poor were burning, tossing about restlessly and dying there and then.

How many stories and incidents of oppression and tyranny have we not heard!? Some came in the form of Alexandra and Caesar - putting the world to the sword. Others came in the form of Nero[1] who was setting fire to Rome. In the greed for conquering countries, they were playing games with the world from one side to the other. The world complained in the court of Allâh that it should be brought to an end. It now said that there was no more need for it because we all [inhabitants of the world] have become wild animals. Everyone has forgotten

[1] A Roman emperor who became notorious for his despotism and cruelty, and was alleged to have started the fire that destroyed a large part of Rome.

Allâh. Man had become the god of man. Destruction was prevalent everywhere. The beauty of all this was that evil was considered to be an art and an accomplishment. Maulânâ Ishâq Jalîs Sâhib rightly said: "Evil was prevalent in every era. However, this era [sixth century C. E.] was such that there was not one to fight it and no one to combat it."

Poetry was certainly prevalent among them. They were certainly intelligent. There were great warriors in Iran. But there was no one to twist the arm of evil. Everyone was overcome by despair. The world was not prepared to listen to anyone. It was not prepared to give up evil so easily. The kings did not care for anyone. The philosophers did not have any regard for anyone. The poets did not bother about anyone. Everyone was alarmed and afraid. They were all so benumbed that is was as though snow had fallen or they were experiencing severe cold. In the midst of all this, the mercy of Allâh gushed forth and the Prophet of Mercy ﷺ appeared in the world, regarding whom the Qur'ân says: "We have not sent you but as a **mercy** to the worlds."

The mercy to the worlds

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِيْنَ

"We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds." (Sûrah al-Ambiyâ, verse 107)

I have recited a verse from Sûrah al-Ambiyâ before you. Allâh ﷻ addresses Muḥammad Rasûlullâh ﷺ and says: "O Muḥammad! 'We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.'" This is a very astounding (and if it was not against the spirit and meaning of the word "mercy", I would have said that) it is a very agonizing announcement from Allâh ﷻ. This announcement was made in that Scripture [the Qur'ân] regarding which divine will had already destined it to be recited in every part of the world and in every era of human history (after its revelation). Even the reciters of this Book will number thousands and millions. Those who ponder over it, those who expound on it, those who explain its secrets and mysteries, those who investigate its every word and every letter, those who look at with doubt and skepticism, those who weigh it in the scale of knowledge and research, those who test it in the light of incidents – all these will continue right till the day of resurrection.

When a person starts a speech, when a person writes an article for a newspaper or magazine (whose life is generally short and whose circle of readers is in most cases limited), then he has to ponder over it repeatedly and weigh his claims time and again out of fear that this article might be rejected or that someone might challenge his integrity. As regards books, the case is a bit different because their life-span is generally longer than that of newspapers and magazines. At times, they are read for years on end by people. Some books even remain alive for centuries. When making a statement or a claim, the author is more conscious of his responsibility. When he lifts his pen to write,

he first weighs what he is about to write and thinks about the consequences of his claim or announcement on his readers and listeners.

After saying all this, ponder over this fact that Allâh ﷻ, the knower of the unseen, is making an announcement in such a Book regarding which He Himself says:

لاَ يَأْتِيْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلاَ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيْمٍ حَمِيْدٍ

"No falsehood can ever attain to it – neither from before it nor from its rear. A revelation from the all-wise, worthy of all praise." (Sûrah Hâ Mîm Sajdah, verse 42)

and regarding which He made the following announcement:

اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ.

"It is We Ourselves who revealed this admonition, and We are its protectors." (Sûrah al-Ḥijr, verse 9)

The extent and greatness of this announcement, and the length and breadth of its time and place are both such extraordinary factors that we cannot just look at them superficially.

The extent of its time refers to right from the commissioning of Muḥammad ﷺ as a Prophet till the day of resurrection, all the generations that will come into this world, and all the different eras that history will go through – this announcement includes and encompasses all of them. This verse covers this entire time span which spreads out over thousands of years.

The extent of its place is that not a single part of this world has been excluded. It does not say that We sent you [O Muḥammad ﷺ] as a mercy to the Arabian peninsula, or to the east, or to a particular continent like Asia. On the contrary, this mercy encompasses the entire world. In the words of the poet, Ḥâlî:

"Neither are the dwellers of water nor those of land deprived of it. The entire land of Allâh has become green and lush."

The fact of the matter is that all the historians of the world, philosophers, thinkers, writers – in fact, the entire human thought – should stand up in astonishment before the extent of this announcement, its comprehensiveness, its greatness and its indefiniteness. They should all at once leave all their tasks and engross themselves in attesting to this fact and in investigating the truthfulness of this announcement. Let alone in the entire history of religions, let alone in the entire history of civilizations and philosophies, let alone in the entire history of reformational and revolutionary movements and endeavours – rather in the entire history of humanity and in the entire human literature, you will not find such a convincing, such a clear, such a taintless, such a comprehensive, and such a universal announcement with regard to any personality, any religion or any movement. The histories of the religions of the world, the lives and teachings of the Prophets whose records are still found are also unable to offer a similar announcement.

In order to establish the importance, greatness, value and worth of a thing, there are generally two criteria for it. One is the number and amount of that thing. The modern definition of it is the "quantity" of a thing. The other is the attribute or characteristic of that thing. The modern definition of it is the "quality" of a thing. This Qur'ânic announcement concerning Rasûlullâh ﷺ includes both aspects. In other words, the prophet-hood of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, his noble existence, the bounty that humanity received from his teachings, the message of a new life which it received, the medicine that it received for its illnesses, its difficulties that were put to an end, the doors of mercy and blessing that opened upon it – all these are unique and matchless both in quality and in quantity.

The word رحمة (mercy) is a word that is used by us profusely on a daily basis. It refers to everything from which man acquires benefit and comfort. There is no limit to the types, categories, levels and stages of this mercy. If someone gives water to a

person, this is also a form of "mercy". If someone gives direction to a person, this is also a form of "mercy". If someone puts on the fan on a hot day for a person, this is also a form of "mercy". A mother shows love to her child, the father makes arrangements for his child's education and upbringing and provides him with the necessities of life – this is a "mercy" of a higher level. The teacher teaches his student and bestows him with the bounty of knowledge, this is also a great form of "mercy". Feeding the hungry and clothing the naked are both forms of "mercy". It is necessary to acknowledge all these forms and incumbent to express gratitude.

However, the greatest show of "mercy" is to save the life of a dying person. You see a child gasping for breath. It seems that he will soon breathe his last. The mother is crying because her most beloved is leaving this world. She can do nothing. The father is walking around aimlessly with worry. Every single one seems to be helpless. Suddenly an expert doctor comes as an angel of mercy and says: "There is no need to be agitated." He pours one drop of medicine in the child's throat and the child opens his eyes. Everyone will say that that doctor is an angel sent by Allâh ﷻ. All the forms of mercy which I mentioned previously will be defeated and insignificant before this form of mercy. This is because this was not a favour on this little child alone. Rather it was a great favour and bounty on that small family and all those who loved it, for the life of this child had been saved.

There is a blind person walking. There is a trench or a well in his path. His next step is almost going to be in that trench or well. A servant of Allâh ﷻ reaches exactly at that time, holds him by the back and prevents him from falling into that trench or well. This servant of Allâh ﷻ will be considered to be an angel for this blind person.

A youngster who is the star of his father's eyes and a support for the family begins to drown in the sea. He is bobbing up and down. He is on the verge of drowning when a servant of Allâh ﷻ risks his own life, jumps into the sea and saves that youngster. This youngster's parents and brother firmly embrace this servant of Allâh ﷻ and do not forget this favour of his for the rest of their lives.

However, the highest manifestation of mercy is that the entire humanity be saved from destruction. There is also a world of difference between different forms of destruction and different forms of danger. One is an eternal destruction and an eternal danger. The "mercy" that the Prophets of Allâh ﷻ show to humans cannot be compared to the previously-mentioned forms of mercy. This tumultuous sea of life, this turbulent ocean of life which not only drowned humans and individuals, but nations and countries. It made cultures and civilizations its morsel of food, whose waves are wide open like that of a crocodile and like that of a roaring lion ready to attack humans.

The concern is how can we cross this merciless ocean and how can we convey this human caravan to not only its coastal destination but to its coastal salvation? The greatest benefactor of the human race and its foggy salvation will find that peace, that ship of humanity that is wandering, that has passengers but no captain, will convey them to the shore. The human race is also grateful to he who gives it the gift of knowledge. It is also grateful to he who increases it in its information. It is also grateful to he who made its life full of comfort and removed or reduced the difficulties of life. It is not ungrateful for anyone's favour. However, its greatest concern is that it should be saved from its enemies who are enemies of its life, and that its ship be conveyed ashore.

The actual problem with *jâhilîyyah* (the days of ignorance) is that the pivot of life had moved from its place. In fact, this

pivot had broken. Man no longer remained a man. The final stages of the case of humanity was presented before the court of Allâh ﷻ. Man had already given testimony against his self. It was under such circumstances that Allâh ﷻ sent Rasûlullâh ﷺ as a Prophet and announced:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds." (Sûrah al-Ambiyâ, verse 107)

A poet says:

"Many people have come into this world as pure and honoured souls. But none [except Muhammad ﷺ] came as a mercy to the worlds."

The Prophet of mercy's extraordinary compassion for the creation

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ. فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللهُ ﷻ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ.

"There has come to you a Messenger from amongst you: it weighs heavily upon him that which harasses you. [He is] anxious over your wellbeing. [He is] extremely compassionate and merciful to the believers. If they still turn away, then say: 'Allâh is sufficient for me. None is worthy of worship beside Him. It is in Him alone that I have placed my trust, and He alone is the master of the mighty throne.'" (Sûrah at-Taubah, verses 128-129)

The word رحمة is an Arabic word and the word رحم is also an Arabic word. However, the word رحم is used more in the Urdu language. These two words mean "to pity", "to help others", "to feel the pain of others", "that you must also feel the pain that the other is feeling", "that you should have the desire and make the endeavour to remove that pain from him". These are the meanings of رحمة and رحم . These are qualities of people of good disposition. Although this is also an attribute of Allâh ﷻ, but He is أرحم الراحمين – the most merciful of those who show mercy. Allâh ﷻ bestowed this attribute in different stages to mankind. The greatest share of this mercy was given to His Prophet and Messenger – the mercy to the worlds - Muḥammad ﷺ. Allâh ﷻ says:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ.

"There has come to you a Messenger from amongst you: it weighs heavily upon him that which harasses you. [He is] anxious over your wellbeing. [He is] extremely compassionate and merciful to the believers."

If a thorn gets into your foot, he feels the pain. It weighs heavily upon him when you fall into difficulty and problems. He does not like it when you fall into difficulty and problems. حريص عليكم – he is extremely concerned about you. He is always worried about you. He is extremely merciful and compassionate towards the believers.

We all know that in the entire world there isn't anyone who is more compassionate towards us than our parents. The motherhoood of a mother is proverbial. If any woman, if any human, if any creature in this world makes a claim of having more love than the mother, everyone will say that he is a liar. They consider him to be a liar. They have no trust in him. They consider this to be a pretentious, hypocritical and false claim. Allâh ﷻ embedded the love of the mother towards her child in her heart. This love has continued ever since this system of the universe came into existence. In this system of the universe, the system of physical upbringing is running on a particular stage and platform. Just as this physical system of ours is running, in like manner the system of spiritual and moral training is connected to the Messengers. Allâh ﷻ bestowed them with such love and compassion, that the love of parents is dust and is tarnished before their [Messengers'] love and compassion. We cannot even gauge the level of love and compassion for their followers that is in the hearts of the Messengers. They are, in some way or the other, able to perceive the pain in the hearts of their followers. If a thorn has to get into their foot or a splinter has to get into their hand, the Messengers feel that pain in their entire bodies. It is extremely difficult for us to gauge what type of relationship they have with their followers.

I recited this verse before you. If you, as Muslims, and if Allâh ﷻ has given you some knowledge of Rasûlullâh's ﷺ life, if you have some familiarity with his circumstances, then we will attest to not only every word and every letter of this verse, but to every dot that it contains.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ. فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللهُ صلى لآ إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ ط عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ.

Such a Messenger has come to you who is from among you. If he was not from among us, he would not have felt our pain and affliction. Human pain is perceived by humans. A brother perceives the pain of his own brother. The residents of a village recognize the pain and affliction of each other. At times, the residents of a village do not understand the difficulties of each other. A city, a district, a country, and thereafter the world – these are still very far away. At times, the residents of a small village do not understand the difficulties of each other. But here you have a Messenger who is from among you. He is from your species. In other words, the thing that causes you the slightest pain, weighs heavily upon him as well and he cannot bear it. It becomes exposed before him and his own life is put into danger.

عزيز عليه ما عنتم – the thing that causes the slightest harm to you, the slightest pain to you – he becomes restless by your pain and your discomfort. حريص عليكم – he is extremely concerned about you. He is in constant worry about you that you should become the accepted servant of Allâh ﷻ. That Allâh's ﷻ mercy be showered upon you. That His forgiveness may be with you. He is concerned that his slightest negligence should not cause you any misfortune. That any utterance of unbelief should not emanate from you. That man should not be encompassed in the circle of hell-fire. That he should not be allowed to join the circle of Satan. That he should not miss out on rendering service to the religion of Allâh ﷻ. That every human should join him. That every human should come into the lap of Allâh's mercy.

He is extremely compassionate and merciful to the believers. We cannot even gauge the level of relationship which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had with his *ummah*, the concern that he had for it and the pain which he had for it. You may understand it as follows: a mother has one child. She has one small child. It is the only child. It is the support of her entire life and the light of the entire household. Imagine the concern the mother has for this child. Imagine the happiness she experiences at his progress. Imagine the pain she feels at his pain. A Messenger of Allâh ﷻ has a similar relationship with his *ummah*. This is the relationship Rasûlullâh ﷺ had with the Sahâbah. From among the people of Mecca, there were those who were his relatives and those who were residents of Mecca. But when they were presented before him after the battle of Badr as prisoners of war, Rasûlullâh ﷺ experienced discomfort even in his salâh. Me and you cannot even estimate the love which he had for salâh, the enjoyment which he experienced in salâh, the tranquillity which he experienced in salâh, the attention that he got from Allâh ﷻ while in salâh. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

قرة عيني في الصلوة

"The coolness of my eyes is in salâh."

Bilâl ﷺ was the *mu'adhdhin* of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The people were speaking of worldly things. What they must have been speaking about? Could they have been speaking anything but good? They must have been speaking about conveying Islam to others. They must have been making plans on how to spread Islam, the Qur'ân and the Hadîth. But the position which salâh held in his eyes, the bond which he had with salâh and the uneasiness that he had for salâh prompts him to say to Bilâl ﷺ: "O Bilâl! Give the *adhân* and provide us with comfort thereby. I have waited too long. I cannot wait any longer. O Bilâl! Give the *adhân* for the sake of Allâh ﷻ so that we may experience some peace. So that we may experience some comfort."

This was the bond which he had with salâh. As for the bond and relationship which he had with his *ummah*?! Rasûlullâh ﷺ says: "At times I am in salâh and I hear a child crying from the back. My heart desires that I lengthen my salâh, that I recite the Qur'ân to my hearts desire, that I fall into lengthy periods of prostration before my Sustainer with humility and submission, that I engage in lengthy conversations with Him, that I make lengthy supplications to Him, that I take His name, that I invoke Him in a beautiful way, that I please Him, that I make Him accept me – but the crying of that child comes into my ears. And I think, this child's mother may also be in the salâh. (In those days, women would also come to the mosque for salâh. Those days were not days of corruption and temptation. Those days were known as خير القرون – the best of eras. The women were therefore permitted to come to the house of Allâh ﷻ with their brothers, with their fathers, with their children in order to offer salâh). Rasûlullâh ﷺ says: "I am in my salâh and I have this intention that I will beseech my Allâh with all my heart, that I will invoke him with all my heart, that I will recite the Qur'ân with all my heart. But then I hear the crying of a child. I think to myself that the child's mother is probably in her salâh as well. That her heart will be restless. Her heart will not be attached to the salâh. She will want to carry her child as quickly as possible. At that time, I shorten my salâh."

My dear brothers! Can there be a stronger bond than this? Do we have such a connection with our salâh? Those who have a strong connection with salâh will be able to understand what a great sacrifice this is. What a great sacrifice this was on the part of Rasûlullâh ﷺ! When he commenced his salâh, he would become totally disengaged from this world and from the hereafter. When he was in salâh, he did not know at all what was happening in the world. He would spend his time standing before Allâh ﷻ, crying before Him, begging of Him and beseeching Him. Despite this, he shortens his salâh because he

hears a child crying. Why does he do this? So that the child's mother is not distressed. This was his concern for his *ummah*. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said: O Muslims! My example and your example is like a person who starts a bonfire – an extremely fierce fire like the one you find in the forests. People sit all around it and warm themselves. You must have seen what happens on cold nights – insects come and fall into this fire. They come in their thousands. If you were to just put a lamp on and the moment the light spreads, these insects come in their droves. Allâh ﷻ alone knows as to who informs them of this light. They all gather like clouds and fall into the fire. So your example is similar to this. A person lights a bonfire and moths begin falling into it. In like manner, you want to fall into the fire of hell. O people! You want to fall into the fire of hell, while I am holding you by your waists and rescuing you from falling into it.

This is the type of relationship and bond which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had with his *ummah*. Rasûlullâh ﷺ was greatly attached to his *ummah*. This attachment was so great, that Allâh ﷻ had to say to him in the Qur'ân:

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

"Would you, perhaps, destroy yourself with grief over them if they do not believe in this message?" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 6)

Rasûlullâh ﷺ had this worry and concern that no one from his *ummah* should go to hell. Every one of them should be eligible for paradise.

This was the bond which he had with salâh. As for the bond and relationship which he had with his *ummah*?! Rasûlullâh ﷺ says: "At times I am in salâh and I hear a child crying from the back. My heart desires that I lengthen my salâh, that I recite the Qur'ân to my hearts desire, that I fall into lengthy periods of prostration before my Sustainer with humility and submission, that I engage in lengthy conversations with Him, that I make lengthy supplications to Him, that I take His name, that I invoke Him in a beautiful way, that I please Him, that I make Him accept me – but the crying of that child comes into my ears. And I think, this child's mother may also be in the salâh. (In those days, women would also come to the mosque for salâh. Those days were not days of corruption and temptation. Those days were known as خير القرون – the best of eras. The women were therefore permitted to come to the house of Allâh ﷻ with their brothers, with their fathers, with their children in order to offer salâh). Rasûlullâh ﷺ says: "I am in my salâh and I have this intention that I will beseech my Allâh with all my heart, that I will invoke him with all my heart, that I will recite the Qur'ân with all my heart. But then I hear the crying of a child. I think to myself that the child's mother is probably in her salâh as well. That her heart will be restless. Her heart will not be attached to the salâh. She will want to carry her child as quickly as possible. At that time, I shorten my salâh."

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hears a child crying. Why does he do this? So that the child's mother is not distressed. This was his concern for his *ummah*. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said: O Muslims! My example and your example is like a person who starts a bonfire – an extremely fierce fire like the one you find in the forests. People sit all around it and warm themselves. You must have seen what happens on cold nights – insects come and fall into this fire. They come in their thousands. If you were to just put a lamp on and the moment the light spreads, these insects come in their droves. Allâh ﷻ alone knows as to who informs them of this light. They all gather like clouds and fall into the fire. So your example is similar to this. A person lights a bonfire and moths begin falling into it. In like manner, you want to fall into the fire of hell. O people! You want to fall into the fire of hell, while I am holding you by your waists and rescuing you from falling into it.

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فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

"Would you, perhaps, destroy yourself with grief over them if they do not believe in this message?" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 6)

Rasûlullâh ﷺ had this worry and concern that no one from his *ummah* should go to hell. Every one of them should be eligible for paradise.

The distinctiveness, salient features and message of Mecca

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الأَصْنَامَ.

When Ibrâhîm said: "O my Sustainer! Make this city secure [for the people], and keep me and my progeny away from worshipping idols." (Sûrah Ibrâhîm, verse 35)

From this verse of the Qur'ân, we learn that the eternal message, sign, salient feature and call of Mecca comprise of three things.

1. The call to absolute monotheism. This is derived from the following words:

وَاجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الأَصْنَامَ. رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ج فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِيْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّيْ ج وَمَنْ عَصَانِيْ فَإِنَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

"and keep me and my progeny away from worshipping idols "O my Sustainer! They have led astray many people. So whoever followed me, he is mine. And whoever disobeyed me, You are forgiving, merciful."

During that universal darkness of polytheism and idol-worship wherein the slightest spark of *tauḥîd* could not be seen – after many centuries, this was the first revolutionary and heart-rendering appeal that was raised at this place on the blessed tongue of the founder of the Ka'bah [Ibrâhîm ﷺ].

2. That timeless advice of eternal worship and establishing of ṣalâh which Ibrâhîm ﷺ gave to the inhabitants of Mecca and to his progeny:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّيْ أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ لا رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ.

"O my Sustainer! I have settled some of my offspring in a valley that is barren, near Your Sacred House. O our Sustainer! So that they may establish ṣalâh." (Sûrah Ibrâhîm, verse 37)

This place which is devoid of the basic and essential means of agriculture, trade, civilization and progress (بواد غير ذي زرع) – was

chosen in order to create in the mind this perception as to why the green, lush, civilized and progressive cities of the world were left (those very places which Ibrâhîm ﷺ had passed through during his journey of guidance) and this particular place was chosen and given preference for the building of the Ka'bah and the inhabitance of the family (both physical and spiritual family) of Ibrâhîm ﷺ.

3. We are taught, that instead of placing our trust on the means, we should place our trust in the Creator of the means and the Lord of all lords. This is understood from the following supplication of Ibrâhîm ﷺ:

فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْ إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُوْنَ.

"Cause, therefore, the hearts of some people to incline towards them and provide them with fruits, perhaps they may be grateful."

Through his firm conviction and trust in Allâh ﷻ, he demonstrated to Namrud, that fire, the four elements, and natural powers are under the command of Allâh ﷻ and are not autonomous. They do not have the choice to demonstrate their idiosyncrasies and to act of their own accord. That fire [which was prepared by Namrud in order to burn Ibrâhîm ﷺ] became a coolness and source of peace for him.

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُوْنِيْ بَرْدًا وَّسَلٰمًا عَلٰى إِبْرَاهِيْمَ.

"We ordered! O fire! Be a coolness and a source of peace for Ibrâhîm." (Sûrah al-Ambiyâ', verse 69)

It is necessary for the people of Mecca and the inhabitants of the *Ḥaram* to fully embrace the above three distinctive qualities and to make them their eternal hallmark. This is both necessary and required of them. It is for this reason that it is referred to as البلد الأمين – a place of peace and security. Its distinctive qualities, its nature and its disposition have to remain just like this even with the thousands of revolutions of time, even with the rise and fall of governments, and even with the differences and

changes in the types of civilization and development. The changing of time should have no effect on it.

In the light of history and the references of scholars and Orientalists, and above all, in the light of the Hadîth, it is said that 'Amr ibn Luhayy is the one who introduced idol-worship into this city [Mecca]. It was he who brought idol-worship from outside and proliferated it in this land. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said that he is walking in hell, dragging his intestines with him. Scholars of the west are also of the opinion that the famous idols of Makkah and Tâ'if, viz. Hubal, Lât, Manât and 'Uzzâ were all imported from the Jordanian city of Petra and from Iraq. These idols were not from the land of البلد الأمين .

During the conquest of Mecca, the Ka'bah, Mecca and Tâ'if were all cleansed of these idols. Thereafter, this holy land returned to the foundation of Ibrâhîm عليه السلام. The Hadîth also gave the glad tiding that this land will remain pure and protected from open idol-worship.

ألا إن الشيطان قد أيس أن يعبد في بلدكم هذا أبدا

"Listen! Satan has become despondent of ever being worshipped in this land of yours."

This land having the attribute of being البلد الأمين – a place of peace and security, and being the standard-bearer of the call of Ibrâhîm عليه السلام, and having the distinctiveness of being a caller and an inviter [towards the one Allâh] has to be maintained forever. In this alone lies the honour of this land, and in this alone is the distinction and pride of its residents.

The sanctity of Mecca and Medina

وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

"He who mischievously seeks the deviated path therein – We shall make him taste a painful punishment." (Sûrah al-Hajj, verse 25)

This verse is a separate miracle of the Qur'ân and a sign of Allâh's ﷻ all-encompassing and eternal knowledge. Till the sixth and seventh century of the Christian era, the civilized world, especially the Arabian peninsula, had experienced just one type of danger and was used to just one type of attack, viz. the danger of war on the battlefield and the experience of an open military attack. This sanctified land [of Mecca] saw an example of this in the form of Abrahah's military attack and the armed assault of the people of the elephants (أصحاب الفيل). Allâh ﷻ completely annihilated these people and rendered their effort useless. He also revealed an entire chapter in the Qur'ân referring to this incident (Sûrah al-Fîl). However, the people of this place did not experience any deep conspiracies, fabrications and atheistic plots against their sanctified land. But Allâh ﷻ, the all-knowing and the all-aware, who sent down this Qur'ân also warned the people that such things could happen and that they should remain on their guard in this regard. Allâh ﷻ also informs them of the punishment and consequence of this:

نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

"We shall make him taste a painful punishment."

In praising the Ka'bah, Allâh ﷻ refers to it as قياما للناس – a source of maintenance for the people. This is a word having very deep and wide meaning. It is difficult to explain and translate its extent and deep meaning. It means that the future of humanity and many arrangements and guarantees for world peace are

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bound to this ancient house [Ka'bah]. As long as this house is maintained with its greatness, sanctity, protection and sacredness, the spiritual and metaphysical benefits of man are guaranteed and protected. The person who attacks the sanctity and sacredness of this place, and makes this centre of *tauhîd*, worship and human protection a playground for his political motives and his personal power and authority, Allâh ﷻ will cause him to suffer loss and destroy him.

It was from this that the leader of the Quraysh and the grandfather of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, 'Abdul Muttalib, said to Abrahah when he intending attacking the Ka'bah:

إن للبيت ربًّا يحميه

"The house [Ka'bah] has a Lord who will protect it."

This was a fact at that time and an actuality which took place. This is a fact at present and will remain so till the day of resurrection.

The fact of the matter is that respect to the House of Allâh ﷻ and love for Medina are signs and barometers of gauging Islamic perception, îmân and Islam. As long as Muslims maintain a strong bond with these two places and have emotional attachment to them, and as long as they do not tolerate any evil eye to fall on these beloved and honourable places, their bond with Islam will remain firm and their religion will remain safeguarded.

The status and message of the barren valley

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ.

"O my Sustainer! I have settled some of my offspring in a valley that is barren, near Your Sacred House. O our Sustainer! So that they may establish ṣalâh." (Sûrah Ibrâhîm, verse 37)

It is gauged from this verse that when Ibrâhîm ﷺ said:

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ

"O my Sustainer! I have settled some of my offspring..."

he reserved the valley of Mecca and the Arabian peninsula till the day of resurrection. The actual nature of this valley is that it is barren.

بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ

"a valley that is barren"

therefore, if any greenery, prosperity, gardens, orchards, pastures, meadows, abundance of water, influx of wealth, proliferation of trade and business are seen, this will all be considered to be on the surface and not an internal condition of this valley. It will be an unnatural, superficial and temporary condition. Is there anyone who recognized the essential nature of this valley better than Ibrâhîm ﷺ? Is there anyone who can make such a claim of knowing it better than him? He came and left his progeny at this place under the inspiration of Allâh ﷻ and acting under divine guidance. He said that he was leaving his progeny in وادي غـــير ذي زرع – a valley that is barren. That he was leaving his family at this place. It was as though he identified the temperament, the status and the nature of this valley forever. Now if the bounties of sustenance and livelihood begin springing forth from the ground and pouring

down from the skies, the nature of this valley will still remain that which Ibrâhîm ﷺ had said and with which he had bound.

Just ponder a bit. What is the connection between

اِنِّيْ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ

"I have settled some of my offspring in a valley that is barren."

And the words:

رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ

"So that they may establish ṣalâh."

Ibrâhîm ﷺ is saying: I have settled some of my offspring in this valley that is barren. O our Sustainer! So that they may establish ṣalâh. So that they may be of those who establish the ṣalâh. That they may invite towards ṣalâh. That they may be responsible for the establishment of ṣalâh throughout the world. He could have left his children in Nineveh or in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (where he used to live). He could have left them in Egypt through which he passed. He could have left them in Syria where the Furthest Mosque (al-Musjid al-Aqṣâ) was built by his own progeny. Would they not have been able to establish the ṣalâh in these places? You all know that through the grace and kindness of Allâh ﷻ, ṣalâh is being offered in these places. Muslims are present there. The choice of place, praise of it and the connection between the establishment and importance of ṣalâh is this very thing: that when they raise their gazes, they will see burnt out mountains. They will see dry, arid land. If they were to see flowing rivers, their proper temperament and their sound mind will guide them and make them ask: what was the wisdom behind our forefather [Ibrâhîm ﷺ] choosing this place for us? The wisdom behind this was that if he wanted to solve our problem of lifelihood, if he wanted to bestow us with prosperity, if he wanted us to live a life of luxury and comfort, he would have chosen a lush and

civilized place for us. The only meaning behind making us live in this place is that he wants us to fulfil some other task. And this place has more affinity with the task that he has in mind for us.

In the light of these Qur'ânic verses, the residents of this place (whether they have come from outside or whether they are the actual inhabitants of this place) should always bear in mind the bond and connection between this barren valley and the establishment of ṣalâh. The essential message of this land is "inviting the world towards the worship of Allâh ﷻ", enabling them to attest to the oneness of Allâh ﷻ, making them to prostrate before Him alone, causing them to realize that the object of their lives is His worship, that they should endeavour to please Him alone, to make the entire economical and worldly system subservient to His injunctions, to demonstrate to the people that they should not rebel against this system of Allâh ﷻ, instead, they should comply to it. In short, it is necessary that you understand that the message and the gift of this place is something else. That some other sound is coming from every particle of this place. Every gust of wind of this place is giving the message of a different life. The message of this life is that materialism is subservient to spiritualism. The life of this world is subservient to that of the hereafter. Deeds and actions are subservient to beliefs. Economics are subservient to morals. Every type of love is subservient to Allâh ﷻ.

The system of the world is bound to the House of Allâh ﷻ

جَعَلَ اللهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ.

"Allâh made the Ka'bah, which is the sacred house, a source of maintenance for the people." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 97)

Till now, very few people realize this fact that the system of the world is bound and connected to the Ka'bah, its call and its status. Our outward eyes cannot see this. However, people of insight understand that just as the existence of mountains creates a stability and balance on earth, in like manner there is another higher system. That system is connected to the Ka'bah – the House of Allâh ﷻ. As long as the House of Allâh ﷻ is existing and as long as its message is alive, the system of the world will exist.

The essential message of this land [of Mecca], the essential gift of this land and the essential bounty of this land is above and higher than all these other things. Without this, neither can the system of this world or of the hereafter be put right. Everyone knows that the system of the hereafter [our affairs of the hereafter] cannot be set right [without this message of this land – without *tauḥîd*]. But very few people realize that even the system of this world – the system of our livelihood – also cannot be put right [without this message of this land]. The country that is existing on a material system and whose citizens' mutual relations are based on material and economic transactions are all living their lives under an unnatural system. Such a system neither enjoys the help of Allâh ﷻ nor His mercy. All the problems that these countries and other countries that are influenced by them are presently experiencing are all as a result of materilism not being bound to spirituality – as a result of this world not being bound to the hereafter. The correct purpose of life is not found there – the purpose which

the creator of mankind [Allâh ﷻ] enjoined for mankind. That purpose is detailed in the following verse of the Qur'ân:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالإِنْسَ إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ مَآ أُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ وَّمَآ أُرِيْدُ أَنْ يُّطْعِمُوْنِ، إِنَّ اللهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُوْ الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِيْنُ.

"I created jinn and man solely for My worship. I do not want any sustenance from them nor do I want them to feed Me. Allâh! He alone is the provider, the mighty, the powerful." Sûrah adh-Dhâriyât, verses 56-58)

This fact has become obscured from their sights. It is for this reason that the matter concerning the hereafter is left aside while their worldly affairs are also in danger. They are experiencing such economic problems that they can find no solution for them. Over there, the advancement of one individual is in conflict with the other, the progress of one group is in conflict with the other, the system of one government is in conflict with the other. Economics is in conflict with economics. In fact, the economic system of one country is trying to damage or destroy the economic systems of other countries. The progress of the economic system of one country is confined to the disorder and chaos of the economic systems of other countries. Therefore, not only are new problems being faced by this country, but because of it, new problems are faced by other countries as well. This materialism has become a threat to their very lives. It has become such a problem, that they can find no solution whatsoever for it. Their great thinkers and academics are at a loss but cannot find a way out.

However, Allâh ﷻ says with regard to this land where His House [the Ka'bah] is:

جَعَلَ اللهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ.

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"Allâh made the Ka'bah, which is the sacred house, a source of maintenance for the people."

Although I am conversant with the Arabic and Urdu languages, and although I have a taste of both languages, I admit that I cannot correctly translate the words قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ . I am not even fully statisfied with the different Urdu translations of the Qur'ân with regard to these words. However, I will try to convey the meaning of this to you. It is this: Allâh ﷻ made the Ka'bah the nucleus of the life of people [in other words, their lives should revolve around the Ka'bah].

This system of the world is neither bound to governments, organizations, military strength, moral philosophies, cultures nor to centres of learning. The system of the world – where our eyes cannot reach – is bound to the House of Allâh ﷻ and to that call for which this House was established. When Ibrâhîm ﷺ built the Ka'bah, he made this supplication:

"O Allâh! I built this House of Yours so that the call to *tauḥîd* may be made."

So the system of the world is bound to Mecca and Medina and the call of these two cities. The essential system of the world is established on correct beliefs, righteous character and morals, relationships based on humanity, brotherhood and love, respect for humanity, the protection of human life and wealth, and to realize that Allâh ﷻ is present and watching every single thing. The system of the world is not dependent on science. It is not dependent on technology. Science and technology have both shown that they are dangers to the system of the world. The entire system of the world can be destroyed in a single minute.

We thus learn that the system of the world is established on divine will. The divine system is existing on those principles and teachings that were brought by the Prophets. The centre of all this is that call, that purpose, that teaching, that central point of which the first caller was Ibrâhîm ﷺ and the rejuvenator and perfecter was Muḥammad ﷺ. These are represented by the House of Allâh ﷻ and the Musjid-e-Nabawî.

Allâh ﷻ says:

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ.

"Allâh made the Ka'bah, which is the sacred house, a source of maintenance for the people."

Allâh ﷻ made the Ka'bah a place of sanctity. He made it the nucleus of the people. It encompasses the establishment and entrenchment of people's livelihood, of the world and of the human race.

This verse also places a responsibility on the Muslims of India. From a religious point, it is this Muslim community that is representing the House of Allâh ﷻ. If this country is destroyed because of excessive love of wealth, human killing, human illness, daily insurrection, selfishness, insensitivity, not recognizing the value of humanity – then it will be our fault and the blessed hand of Rasûlullâh ﷺ will be against us. This is because we are the followers of that Prophet who was given the title of رحمة للعالمين – a mercy to the worlds. Allâh ﷻ says with regard to him:

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ.

"Allâh would never punish them as long as you are among them. And Allâh will never punish them as long as they continue asking for forgiveness." (Sûrah al-Anfâl, verse 33)

No country should be allowed to be destroyed even in the presence of such a nation which attributes itself to this Prophet of mercy, which bears his teachings and which emulates him. It is the responsibility of such a nation that these facts remain alive, that it protects the country and that it protects the country from social suicide and self-destruction.

CHAPTER 10

MATERIALISTIC THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

"I have studied the Qur'ân with this in mind:

It is a living book and a talking album or mirror,

In which individuals can also see their faces,

Nations can also see their appearances…

And the consequence of the progress and rise of nations, empires, and civilizations can all be seen in this Book…"

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

Materialistic thinking and its short-sightedness

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلاً رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَّحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَّجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا..... وَلَوْ لآ إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لا لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ.

"Set forth for them the parable of two men: We made for one of them two orchards of vines, and surrounded them with date-palms, and placed between them a cornfield..... When you entered your orchard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 32-39)

The story of two farm owners

The Qur'ân relates the story of two farm owners. This is a story from which we have more experience with the first farmer in our daily lives. The story of the companions of the cave (أصحاب الكهف) may present itself to us after years and centuries. But this story [of the two farmers] is such that probably takes place before our very eyes everywhere and all the time. Such a story is repeated all the time. It is the story of a person who was fortunate and privileged in every respect. All the means of comfort and luxury were provided to him. He had two orchards of a lovely and desirable fruit like grapes. These orchards were surrounded from all sides by lovely date-palms. These date-palms had completely encompassed these orchards. There was also a cornfield between these orchards. This was the height of contentment and happiness for an average lifestyle. The middle class and an average lifestyle is in most cases a criterion and a standard in worldly matters.

The fortune and success of this wealthy and prosperous person was not confined to the existence of these orchards. Instead, all the means and resources were at his disposal. Both these orchards were yielding their best produce:

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اٰتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِّنْهُ شَيْئًا ۙ وَّفَجَّرْنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا.

"Each of the two orchards yields its produce and does not decrease anything from it. And We caused a river to flow between the two [orchards]." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 33)

In short, such prosperity and good fortune had been given to him to the full. And all the means of comfort and luxury were not only present, but were in abundance and profusion.

A materialistic mind shows its true colour

At this point, the materialistic mind of this person shows its true colour – that very colour that has always been exhibiting itself in people of the government, in landowners, in national leaders, in craftsmen, in factory owners and in military leaders. They develop a strong materialistic inclination that is not bound to îmân, correct recognition of Allâh ﷻ and correct nurturing. They attribute their entire prosperity and their entire fortune to their knowledge, expertise, intelligence and endeavours. The same thing was said and done by Qârûn:

قَالَ إِنَّمَآ أُوْتِيتُهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِيْ

"He said: "I received this wealth because of some knowledge which I possess."" (Sûrah al-Qasas, verse 78)

In the present story, the farmer who possessed all the means is displaying his arrogance before the one who did not have all these means. He says with not only explicitness, but with boldness and audacity:

أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالاً وَّأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا

"I have more wealth than you and [more] people of respect." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 34)

He enters his fountain of power and authority and his centre of wealth and prosperity in such a manner, that he does not even recognize his own self, his Sustainer, unseen means, nor that of divine will which executes its decision from the seven heavens

– that very divine will which comes as a barrier between man and his possessions, in fact, between man and his heart. Such a person wrongs his own self in all ways – rationally, practically, morally and logically. This crooked materialistic thinking causes his tongue to announce that neither he nor his orchards will perish. He rejects the resurrection and life after death. In his absolute foolishness and stupidity he says that this success and prosperity are forever and everlasting. And that this world and the hereafter (if there is any hereafter) will never come to an end:

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ ۚ قَالَ مَآ أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖٓ أَبَدًا. وَّمَآ أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً.

"He entered his orchard having wronged himself. He said: "I don't think that this orchard will ever be destroyed. And I do not think that resurrection will take place."" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 35-36)

He thinks that he is included among those fortunate and privileged few who are never spurned, whose fate is never disloyal, and who are always seen on the high pedestals of prosperity and honour:

وَلَئِنْ رُّدِدْتُّ إِلٰى رَبِّيْ لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا.

"If I am ever conveyed to my Sustainer, I will find something better than this upon reaching there." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 36)

Such people always think that there is no need whatsoever for îmân, good deeds, exertion and toiling. They feel that this prosperity of theirs is natural and bestowed [inherited] and that it can keep them satisfied all the time.

The spiritual way of thinking

Allâh ﷻ had opened the eyes of his friend to the truth and to îmân. His friend possessed the eternal wealth of the recognition of Allâh ﷻ, and knowledge of His attributes and His actions. He knew that it is only Allâh ﷻ who has absolute authority in the universe. That He alone is the creator of the means. That

when He wills, He can overturn that status quo. He therefore objected to his statements and openly opposed his materialistic way of thinking. He reminded him of his origin, his essence and his fundamental nature. This is that hard and strong reality which this materialistic and self-proclaimed fortunate person always tries to deny and always tries to flee far away from.

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّكَ رَجُلاً.

"His friend said to him while conversing with him: 'Do you reject the One who created you from soil, then from a drop of sperm, then fashioned you into a man?'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 37)

It is extremely difficult for proud and arrogant people to listen to this. We can gauge this from the following. He said to him that he is in exactly the opposite direction from him. That he has a totally different inclination. And that is, firm belief in Allâh ﷻ:

لَكِنَّا۠ هُوَ اللهُ رَبِّي وَلاَ أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا.

"I still maintain that He is Allâh, my Sustainer and I associate no one with my Sustainer." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 38)

He then reminds him of that fundamental and essential fact around which the entire Sûrah al-Kahf revolves. And he placed his finger on that spot where such people's weakness or painful vein is found. He said: You should not look at the outward means. Rather, you should look at the creator and master in whose hands are the reins of all these means. These means of comfort and these items of luxury over which you are so proud and arrogant have not come of their own accord, are not as a result of your exertion, nor are they products of your intellect and intelligence. They are a result of Allâh's ﷻ wisdom and power – that Allâh who created everything in the most beautiful way. The believing person directs the attention of this materialist in a very wise and subtle manner towards admitting

the power of Allâh ﷻ and showing gratitude to Him for His bounties:

وَلَوْ لاَ إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ.

"When you entered your orchard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 39)

On reading this story of this farmer, it seemed to me that the picture of this present era (which has reached the peak of material progress) has been presented before me in these verses:

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اٰتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِّنْهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلاَلَهُمَا نَهَرًا. وَّكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالاً وَّأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا.

"Each of the two orchards yields its produce and does not decrease anything from it. And We caused a river to flow between the two [orchards]. He received the fruit. So he said to his friend when he was conversing with him: 'I have more wealth than you and [more] people of respect.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 33-34)

Can a better picture than this be taken of America?! You could consider "the two orchards" as North and South America, or the east and the west. جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ – two orchards of vines. Is there any shortage of anything over here? Is there any fruit that is rare over here? Is there anything that is not found here? All the bounties of Allâh ﷻ are present here. But what is it that is lacking over here? There is a lack of that thing towards which a believer, a person of insight drew his attention:

وَلَوْ لاَ إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ

"When you entered your orchard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 39)

The only thing that is lacking here is "Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh." It is this very thing that can turn sand into gold. It is this very thing

that can turn materialism into the highest form of worship. It is this very thing that can tame the rebellious horses of the human soul into such loyal and obedient means of transport that they become blessed conveyances. This "Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh" is such a key, that irrespective of which lock it is placed in, it will open it. If there is anything that is lacking in this western world, in this materialistic world, it is this "Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh." These may appear to be just a few words. They may be used in our lives again and again. مَـا شَاءَ الله – when did you come? مَا شَاءَ الله – when did you tailor this suit? مَا شَاءَ الله – when did your son graduate? مَا شَاءَ الله – when did you purchase this car? مَا شَاءَ الله – when did you build this house?

The oceans of eloquence that are flowing in the words مَـا شَاءَ الله and which are encompassing the entire world, the materialism, the arrogance, the self-acclaimed power, and the delusion of man that he is doing everything by himself – you and I do not perceive the strange and extraordinary power that is subduing and overpowering all this. It is for this reason that we use these words [مَـا شَاءَ الله] at the wrong places. We say these words in so many different situations, that we no longer perceive their greatness and miraculous nature. These words mean that whatever is happening and whatever is taking place is doing so by the will and power of Allâh ﷻ. There is no credit whatsoever to man in this regard. There is no praise whatsoever to man in this regard.

The reality that is expressed in the words

اَلْحَمْدُ لله رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

"All praises belong to Allâh ﷻ alone, the Sustainer of the worlds."

And the statement that is made in the words

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنَ

"His command is merely this, that when He wills to do something He says to it: 'Be!' and it immediately becomes." (Sûrah Yâ Sîn, verse 82)

And the virtue that is mentioned in the "raising of the heavens" – are all encompassed by the words:

مَا شَآءَ اللهُ ۙ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ

"Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh."

In other words, only what Allâh wills shall come to pass. No one and nothing has any power except Allâh ﷻ.

Today someone may say that America has everything. That Allâh ﷻ blessed it with all His treasures. That it is a physical portrayal of the words:

أَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَّبَاطِنَةً

"He perfected His bounties upon you, both outward and inward." (Sûrah Luqmân, verse 20)

and that it [America] is a picture of:

يَأْتِيْهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ

"Its sustenance used to come to it in abundance from everywhere." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 112)

That sustenance used to come to it like continuous rain. This is the condition of America. However, if we were to ask that why is America not giving the message of peace and tranquillity, why is America not giving the message of guidance to the world? It may provide material help, it may bestow material favours…but America has no sincere friends.

America is deprived of an authentic divine religion

America has everything, but it is deprived of the divine Book of Allâh ﷻ, it is deprived of the bounty of divine teachings. It has to understand that this entire factory [of America and the

world] is run by Allâh ﷻ. And that whatever we have done has been achieved by Allâh ﷻ. That we have to spend all this in accordance with His pleasure. That we have to spend all this in His worship. That we are the servants of Allâh ﷻ. America is totally devoid and deprived of this. If it is lacking in anything, it is this.

It may have جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ - two orchards of vines, but it does not have مَا شَاءَ اللهُ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ - Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh. The owner of this worldly paradise can only be he to whom the Qur'ân referred in this story of two men one of whom is an absolute materialist, who is a rebel [against Allâh ﷻ], who is ungrateful to Allâh ﷻ, who worships materialism and worships himself. The other is the believer. He may be [physically and monetarily] weak. He may not have "two orchards of vines", he may be deprived of orchards, but he is a believer. Allâh ﷻ blessed him with the wealth of îmân.

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا – both the orchards yielded their produce to the full. Like when something boils over. Both orchards boiled over and gushed forth just as a fountain gushes forth. Their dormant powers and lushness gushed forth. They did not display any shortcoming or defect in this regard.

Now comes the turn of the second person. He says, all this is correct and in its place, but it only needs the following words to be added:

مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لاَ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ

"Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh."

وَلَوْ لآ إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لاَ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ

"When you entered your orchard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allâh wills shall come to pass. There is no power except with Allâh.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 39)

Why did you not say that all this is by the grace of Allâh ﷻ? That it is as a result of His mercy and power. The words:

مَا شَآءَ اللهُ لاَ لاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ

Are actually the life and soul of this entire enterprise.

Allâh ﷻ thus encouraged His Prophet ﷺ and those who recite the Qur'ân with him to hand over all their affairs, all their strength and all their capabilities to Allâh ﷻ. That they should hand over every will and intention of theirs to Him and bind all this to His will alone:

وَلاَ تَقُوْلَنَّ لِشَاْيْءٍ إِنِّيْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا. إِلاَّ أَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللهُ ۚ وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيْتَ وَقُلْ عَسٰى أَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِ رَبِّيْ لأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هٰذَا رَشَدًا.

"Do not say of anything: 'I shall do that tomorrow,' without (adding): 'If Allâh wills.' Remember your Sustainer when you forget, and say: 'It is hoped that my Sustainer shall show me a way of goodness that is closer than this.'" (Sûrah al-Kahf, verses 23-24)

On every occasion, you should say مَا شَاءَ اللهُ and إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ with all your heart.

The person who attributes every virtue, excellence and achievement to Allâh ﷻ, who places his trust in Allâh ﷻ in every intention of his, and who hopes for His kindness and grace – such a person can never submit himself before materialism and materialists. Such a person can never hand over the reigns of his life to his soul and the desires of his soul.

The words مَـا شَاءَ اللهُ and إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ may appear to be very light and insignificant. They are most often used without any understanding and forethought. There is no feeling and perception when saying them. But in reality, they are very weighty words. They are filled with very deep meanings and truths. They strike a hard blow to blind materialism, the soul and desires of the soul.

Modern means and instruments of amusement and entertainment

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ. وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا. أُولٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ.

"Of people is he who purchases frivolous talk in order to lead astray [those] without knowledge from the path of Allâh, and to make fun of it. Those, for them is a humiliating punishment." (Sûrah Luqmân, verse 6)

There are two types of means and instruments for play, amusement, enjoyment and entertainment. One is excessive interest, engrossment and obsession with sports, tournaments and displays.[1] The second type is frivolous talks and conversations. When people become engrossed in this, they become neglectful of their responsibilities, duties and the remembrance of Allâh ﷻ. Stories, fables and immoral tales become part and parcel of such conversations. In the present verse, Allâh ﷻ combined both play and amusement, and also stories and tales – and referred to both as لهـو الحديـث – frivolous talk.

This is also a miracle of the Qur'ân that this verse is also applicable to the modern forms and instruments of play and amusement. This is especially so with regard to video and television. This is because these are means of amusement and conversation at the same time. The relevance of this verse is

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[1] It is extremely sad that the engrossment of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States with cricket and football matches and tournaments is increasing day by day and that they are spending huge amounts of money in this regard. The huge crowds and spectators are unprecedented. This squandering of time and money is most sorrowful. It cannot be even imagined how many people are missing their ṣalâh in this way. The *'ulamâ'* and leaders of these countries need to seriously think about all this.

further completed by the following words of the verse. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ.

"Of people is he who purchases frivolous talk in order to lead astray [those] without knowledge from the path of Allâh."

Now look, in order to acquire all this [television and video], there is no alternative but to spend money and purchase these items from the business places. It seems [from this verse] that only the names – television and video – have been left out. The Qur'ân is in the Arabic language. How can English words come into it? This is not something concerning the intellect. However, the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân is such that over 1400 years ago the Book that came down – I am saying this while sitting in the mosque – that television and video are mentioned in it. I will not be wrong in saying this. This is because the Qur'ân says: مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ – he who purchases frivolous talk. Those who are conversant with Arabic eloquence and have a true taste of the language – like that of the actual speakers of the language. It is solely the favour of Allâh ﷻ that we received that bounty of the Hijâz and Yemen whereby we became proficient in this language. Our teacher was an Arab.[1] We studied mostly Arabic books. All praise is due to Allâh ﷻ for this. So we were talking about these beautiful words لهو الحديث. Our taste of the Arabic language is looking at the extensive and wide circle of these words – لهو الحديث . I am unable to translate these words. I am a resident of Lucknow but I am admitting that I cannot fully and truly translate these words. But they mean, playing around with words – frivolous talk. Now you tell me, what do you find on

[1] Referring to Shaykh Khalîl ibn Muhammad Yemeni *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*.

the radio, television, video, etc.? If it had been such that many people like sports and even spend money in purchasing it. Then television and video would not have come into it. But the verse mentions frivolous talk. It is, regarding which I can explicitly claim that in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, and even Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymîyyah's *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* mind did not go towards this (i.e. towards this television and video). This is the miracle of the Qur'ân. لهو الحديث – frivolous talk, the play of words. What is this? It is videos, it is these moving and speaking pictures of the television, it is these records [cd's and dvd's] that are watched and listened. These are all لهو الحديث.

Over 1400 years ago these things were not only not invented, but no one did not see them even in his wildest dreams. No one could have even imagined this at that time. But the Book of Allâh ﷻ openly said it that there are many people who purchase لهو الحديث.

The essential difference in the deviation of Western thought

At present, I can remember two verses of the Qur'ân wherein I can see a clear picture of the West and wherein the Western mind is unveiled. Those who are conversant with the Arabic language, those who have some literary taste, and those who have some affinity with the language and style of the Qur'ân will endeavour to reach the horizons and depths of these verses and words. I am unable to make a complete and perfect translation of these verses. One of these verses is from Sûrah an-Naml:

بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الاٰخِرَةِ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۖ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ.

"Rather, their knowledge has fallen short [of the truth] as regards the hereafter. In fact, they are doubtful of it. In fact, they are blind to it." (Sûrah an-Naml, verse 66)

I am excusing myself and saying this. I do not have the courage to excuse myself to the being who revealed the Qur'ân [Allâh ﷻ], but I am excusing myself from the eloquence and miraculous nature of the Qur'ân and translating these words as follows: بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ – their knowledge as regards the hereafter has become punctured.

Bearing in mind the present situation of the West and its intellectual and innovational journey, I cannot find a better example than that of a person driving a car when suddenly all its tyres become punctured. Look and ponder a little. That knowledge was moving at quite a speed. It came after covering a good journey. It displayed its intellect in the fields of rational thought, nature, mathematics and even what is beyond nature. But when that very knowledge reached the being and attributes of Allâh ﷻ and the stage of the hereafter, then ادارك علمهم – it seems that air suddenly came out from the tyres – they became punctured. The words after this present to us different mental

conditions or different stages of the West: بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا – in fact, they are doubtful of it, بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ – in fact, they are blind to it.

The other verse is that which Imâm Ibn Taymîyyah *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* made the basis of his book, *an-Nubûwwât*:

بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيْطُوْا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَلَمَّا يَاْتِهِمْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ.

"The fact is that they began rejecting that whose understanding they could not grasp, and as yet, its reality has not dawned upon them." (Sûrah Yûnus, verse 39)

This is a vain imagination of the West that if something cannot be seen, it is not existing. To confine the existing things to what is seen is a severe weakness of human knowledge and human intellect. The West gave this [weakness] an intellectual colour. This is a great misfortune for man. In fact, it is a transgression against humanity. To be deprived of the bounty of Allâh ﷻ is this very difference between knowledge and prophet-hood. Ibrâhîm عليه السلام explained this in very simple words:

أَتُحَآجُّوْنِّيْ فِي اللهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ

"Are you disputing with me about Allâh ﷻ when He has already blessed me with guidance? When He has taken hold of my hand and placed me onto the straight path? Now how can there be any room for doubt or any questions?" (Sûrah al-An'âm) – this is an explanatory translation.

This is also the essence of the announcement which Rasûlullâh ﷺ made when he was on Mt. Safâ and the people were in the bottom of the valley. He said to them: "If I say to you that there is an army behind this mountain and it is about to attack you, will you believe me?" The Arabs were far behind the West in philosophy and civilization. But they proved to be far ahead of the West in their sound intellect. They saw that the person who is saying this is on the top of the mountain. This person can see

in front of him and behind him as well. Moreover, this person never ever speaks lies. They therefore clearly replied: "We will certainly believe you." With this sound intellect of theirs, these Arabs reached those heights where the Greeks and Romans could not reach. And where the West could not reach till today. Those Arabs immediately decided that there is no possibility whatsoever of rejecting or belying this person merely because they cannot see [beyond the mountain].

I believe that whenever a comparative study is made of Western thought and beliefs and Islamic facts and beliefs, this difference should most certainly be borne in mind. Without this, we will not acquire that ability with which we could reach the fundamental reality.

Satanic promptings

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ أَزًّا

"Do you not see that We have let loose the Satans upon the rejecters in order to incite them [into sin]." (Sûrah Maryam, verse 83)

The words تؤزهم أزا – are just two. But their manifestations, their forms, their levels and their means are so many, that they cannot be counted. These Satans, in their large numbers, incite those who believe them. What different temptations they give them, what bribes they give them, what different enticements and in what different forms they create within them, in what different ways they facilitate things for them, in what ways do they encourage and prompt them?

All these questions are encompassed by these two words تؤزهم أزا – in order to incite them [into sin]. In other words, they sometimes blow some incantation into their ears, sometimes they bring some picture before them, sometimes they instill some hope into them, sometimes they bring before them such results that they assume that they are doing something very good and that they should commit this sin.

This does not mean that this is a legal matter in the sense that when Allâh ﷻ sets these devils loose onto the unbelievers, it now becomes permissible for them. Rather, Allâh ﷻ is showing His system. He is informing us that these devils are given this opportunity as a test and an examination – that they go to those who believe in Him and those who reject Him and incite them in different ways towards evil.

These different ways would include: reading different types of literature, watching television and video, listening to the radio, reading novels, going to the cinema, through monetary enticement, through sexual enticement, through political

enticement, through ambitions of leadership and authority, through those ways which are referred to as زين لهم الشيطان – Satan beautified for them. All these forms are encompassed by the words تؤزهم أزا – in order to incite them into sin.

The different forms of enticing one into sin that are found in the world today – whether in America, in Europe, in the Eastern countries, in the Muslim countries – the different ways of disobeying Allâh ﷻ, the different aims and objectives that are presented before people, the different ways of achieving these aims and objectives that are shown to them or which they find for themselves – are all encompassed by the words تؤزهم أزا – in order to incite them into sin.

In this way, a net of Satan is laid. This net instills hope into them by urging them, by showing them a green garden, by showing examples and patterns to them, by creating these urges within them, by bringing them in front of them. The Qur'ân describes and says that their companions bring these things before them, beautify them before them and display them to these people. They then incite them and urge them towards sin.

You see that there are those who are supporters and defenders of righteous deeds. There are those things that recommend one to do good deeds. This is done through heavenly revealed books. This is done through the Hadîth and the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. This is done through the paths of spirituality. This is done through the sincere and accepted servants of Allâh ﷻ. This is done through their stories that are found in the books of history. This you will see in the statements of Shaykh 'Abdul Qâdir Jilânî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and Shaykh Ḥasan al-Baṣrî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Through the effects of their assemblies from which hundreds and thousands of Jews and Christians used to embrace Islam. You will find in Arab history and Arab literature that there were those who were engrossed in sin and

theft, who used to repent from their sins. In like manner, the *adhân* that you still here in India, the Islam that is still present in this country – this is all through the blessings of Khwâjah Mu'înud Dîn Chishtî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*.

So just as you see these different ways of righteousness and the effects thereof, in like manner you can see the evil effects in Satanic circles. Satan enjoys authority and power over them. Satan's words are accepted as divine. Allâh ﷻ expressed all this in two very eloquent words of the Arabic language: تؤزهم أزا – Satan incites them into sin by prodding them on. Like a ball that is thrown up and children are urged to jump higher and higher. Like when something is fallen down, you pick it up and pass it to someone. In reality, the nature of those things is to remain down, to remain low. In other words, those things in their essence, in their consequences and in their nature are very low and despised. But Satan raises them high and displays them before the people.

The words تؤزهم أزا – encompass all this. To translate these words into any language is almost impossible. It is even difficult to convey them in the Arabic language.

enticement, through ambitions of leadership and authority, through those ways which are referred to as زين لهم الشيطان – Satan beautified for them. All these forms are encompassed by the words توزهم أزا – in order to incite them into sin.

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The materialistic way of looking at success

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتُنَا بَيِّنَٰتٍ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَىُّ ٱلْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثَٰثًا وَرِءْيًا.

"When Our clear verses are recited to them, those who are unbelievers say to the believers: 'Which of the two groups has a better position and whose assembly is better?' Many a generation have We destroyed before them who surpassed them in riches and in splendour." (Sûrah Maryam, verses 73-74)

These verses contain a great admonition and also a means of glad tidings and consolation. Allâh ﷻ says: "When Our clear verses are recited to them, those who are unbelievers address the believers and say to them:

أَىُّ ٱلْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا

Think about this a bit. We and you are two groups. From these two groups, which group is in more comfort at presest? Which one enjoys a better position? Who appears to be better? Who has more possessions? At present, which of the two is better?

How can we accept this: we are living in comfort over here [in this world], we are living in luxury, we are enjoying ourselves, we are living with honour, we are living in palaces while you are living in shacks. (There were numerous other differences between the unbelievers and the believers). Now how will all this change upon going there [in the hereafter]? How will you go to paradise while we will be in hell? What is your proof for this?

In other words, this person analysed all this from a material aspect. A story was related in Sûrah al-Kahf with regard to the person who owned two orchards. Allâh ﷻ gave him two orchards, He caused a river to flow between the two orchards, the orchards were yielding their fruit, he had grape vines, and

various other things. This person said: "The condition that I am enjoying in this world, I will enjoy the same in the hereafter as well. He clearly announced:

وَلَئِن رُّدِدتُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّى لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنقَلَبًا.

"If I am ever conveyed to my Sustainer, I will find something better than this upon reaching there." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 36)

This is man's wrong way of analyzing things. When he experiences a time of goodness, comfort, honour, authority, then he thinks that this will either remain all the time, or that if there is any change, it will be for the better – that he will receive something better than what he presently has.

So what the owner of the two orchards had said is now being said again:

أَىُّ ٱلْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا

Just look properly a bit. What are you talking about? What are these vain and imaginary things that you are saying? Who has the comfort and luxury of the other world at present? Who is living in palaces? Who is enjoying himself? Who is making a name for himself?

Your condition is such that you do not even receive a full stomach to eat. Sometimes you remain hungry, sometimes you get a little to eat. You do not have sufficient clothes to cover yourself. You do not have houses to live in. So how can we accept that all this will change? That after death, you will receive everything and that we will be deprived of everything?

This is a weakness of man that he determines one good condition over the other. He does not understand that this measure will change. He does not realize that the measure over here is something, and over there it is something else. The measure of this world is inheritance, it is receiving wealth for free. The measure of this world is work, effort and toiling. The

measure of this world is to know those sciences and those ways whereby one acquires wealth. The measure of this world is technology, examinations and degrees and diplomas. These are some of the means of comfort in this world of means.

The measure of the hereafter is something else

However, the measure of that world [of the hereafter] is different. The measure of that world is beliefs, it is good deeds. The measure of that world is what you did in this world. The measure is that of Allâh's pleasure. When the measure changes, we see that the condition of one country cannot be measured with that of another country. The measure of this country is different from that of another country. The measure in America is something else. For example, the means of acquiring wealth over there are different from here. The position, the past, the capital and the distinction of the wealthy over there are all different from those over here. Over here we see that a millionaire's son becomes a millionaire for free. Or that someone might find some hidden treasure, or someone might show kindness to another and give him for free. But in those countries wealth is acquired through toiling, through capability, through distinction and through surpassing others.

Since we cannot measure the condition of one country with that of another because the measures are different, how can we measure one world with the other? How can we measure the condition of one world with the condition of the other? This is because the measures are completely different. If the measures of this world are a handful or a hand-span, the measures of that world [the hereafter] are miles upon miles. The measures of that world are îmân and unbelief (kufr). The measures of that world are the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ and the displeasure of Allâh ﷻ. The measures of that world are following the Prophet ﷺ or disobeying him. The measures of that world are acting within the limits or transgressing the limits.

So Allâh ﷻ says that these are superficial people – who only look at the surface. When they are invited towards îmân, they reply:

أَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا

Just look properly a bit and see who is living a more comfortable life over here? Who is living with honour over here? In other words, they feel that they will continue living in this way and that this system will continue. So Allâh ﷻ replies that there is no reason for this system to continue in this way. This is because Allâh ﷻ asked you to toil in this world. You should eat, earn and toil. The more a person toils, the better a position he is building for himself. And the more comfort he will live with. The more capabilities a person develops with regard to the prevalent sciences and arts of this world, the more distinction he will live with.

However, these things have no value whatsoever in that world. Allâh ﷻ says:

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا.

"Those whose endeavours were always going astray in the life of this world and were on the assumption that they were working very well." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 104)

Those who are toiling in this world are "on the assumption that they were working very well". Allâh ﷻ says: "those whose endeavours were always going astray in the life of this world". All their endeavours and efforts are being utilized in the field of this world and within the limits of this world. None of these will avail them in the hereafter.

Study your history

In order to make them understand, Allâh ﷻ gives another example. These people say:

measure of this world is to know those sciences and those ways whereby one acquires wealth. The measure of this world is technology, examinations and degrees and diplomas. These are some of the means of comfort in this world of means.

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"Which of the two groups has a better position and whose assembly is better?"

So Allâh ﷻ says, okay, the hereafter is still a bit far. But at least look at your own history. This happened just yesterday:

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ

How many generations, how many nations and how many villages We destroyed!

هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثَاثًا وَرِءْيًا

"who surpassed them in riches and in splendour". The word اثاث can also be translated as "furniture". So they were far better than them in the furniture they had, in the goods of comfort they owned and in their splendour.

If Allâh ﷻ can destroy them despite all these possessions of theirs, and these things were unable to avail them in any way, then after the end of this world, of what benefit can these things be in the new world? If they were of any avail, they would have availed those people because they were أحسن أثاثا ورئيا – they surpassed them in riches and splendour.

Now look, that [past] time was not a time of many possessions. But the Qur'ân is an eternal book. Today, there is much importance given to riches and possessions. So much of importance was not given to riches and possessions in the past. Today all we are concerned about is whether you have this or not. Do you have an air conditioner or not? How many lounge suites do you have? How many tables do you have? What type of drawing room do you have? Is your drawing room adorned and decorated or not? It is through these things that a person is estimated. It is through these things that he is given a status. What type of drawing room does he have? How is the hall leading to the drawing room? Does he have an attached

bathroom or not? If he has a guest, where will he stay [does he have a guest room]? It is all these things that we are concerned about.

The value of riches and possessions

Allâh ﷻ says:

هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثَاثًا وَرِءْيًا

"who surpassed them in riches and in splendour"

It is our estimate and our guess that at the time when the Qur'ân was revealed, the people who heard it first were the Arabs who lived in the desert, who lived in the limited riches and possessions of Arabia. That they could not have understood the value of riches and possessions as we can understand them today. That who is better than us as regards items of luxury and comfort? At that time, the Arabs must have thought: does he have a source of water or not? Does he have a hearth or not? Does he have proper utensils in which he could cook his food? This was their life. They were desert dwellers. They used to drink camel's milk. Whether they get their bread or not, they would drink camel's milk and eat some dates in order to satisfy their hunger. This was the condition of their food and drink. This was the condition of their homes. In short, civilization was in its very initial stages.

We translated the word اثاث as "furniture" previously. It has become totally easy to understand the extent, the importance and the meaning of this word in our times. So who was better as regards his items of luxury and comfort? Who appeared to be better? Who was it that when we look at him, we become intimidated and we say in surprise: "He has so much of possessions!" What happened after this? وَأَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ – We destroyed these villages and towns in such a way that none of these things were of any avail to them. They were all reduced

to dust. They were completely ruined – nothing was left. Their riches and possessions were also completely ruined. They had plenty of brooms. Our one single broom swept away all their brooms. Everything was annihilated.

In the sight of the Qur'ân, this world in whose eternity the materialists believe and which the worshippers of profit and pleasure made their centre and deity – in the sight of the Qur'ân the value of this world is only that much as mentioned above. The Qur'ân labels all those measurements and criteria (on which the materialists place their full trust and in which they have high hopes) as wrong and baseless. It clearly states that the measurements of îmân are worthy of preference and they are the true criteria.

The proliferation of immorality and evils among the believers

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ.

"Those who like that immoral conduct should spread among the believers – for them is a painful punishment in this world and in the hereafter. Allâh knows and you do not know." (Sûrah an-Nûr, verse 19)

This verse is a miracle in itself. At the time when this verse was revealed, a certain incident had taken place within the limited society of Medina. The people began speaking and talking about this incident in their assemblies. How large these assemblies were, how great this incident was, who were connected to this incident – all these questions were such that the extensiveness of this Qur'ânic verse was far greater. The Qur'ân concerns itself with something more than generations, more than centuries, more than historical and geographical distances. We are studying the commentary of this verse today. Those who like that immoral conduct and evils should spread among the believers – this can be pictured in today's newspapers, television, video, radio, novels, pictures, films, literature and philosophies. To have imagined this in any other era would have been difficult. In that environment of Medina, the people must have resorted to belief in the unseen and applied this verse to a particular incident. But today, the manner in which all the forces of the world are engrossed in the spreading of immorality could not have been imagined in the past.

The destructive forces in our society which are spreading moral anarchy and rebellion have such means and resources that they can prove the night to be day and vice versa, they can turn light into darkness and vice versa.

This is the condition of the political, economic and social systems of the world. Look at the governments of Europe, America and Russia. Together with this, look at the governments of the East. They are the ones whose minds are corrupt, whose objectives are corrupt, whose aims are destructive, whose lives are corrupt, whose morals are corrupt, whose thinking is corrupt. And they are the ones who have structured a social system which is deciding the fate of nations and peoples. The present situation is such that the magic of this group is casting its spell. It is in the hands of this group that the means of communication [of spreading ideas and thoughts] are. It is with regard to them that the Qur'ân says:

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ أَنْ تَشِيْعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا.

"Those who like that immoral conduct should spread among the believers."

CHAPTER 11

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION

Deeds, the reward for deeds and Allâh's ﷻ law of retribution are all totally found in the Qur'ân. Allâh ﷻ explicitly says:

"O Muslims! This is neither confined to you nor is it confined to the people of the Book (who have made many great claims). It is Our divine law:

مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْءً يُجْزَ بِهٖ

"Whoever commits an evil will be given retribution for it."

Whether it be of weakness, shortcomings, heedlessness, treachery, disloyalty, causing differences, lack of good deeds, worship of wealth, worship of authority – Allâh ﷻ has a consequence and a result for all this. He has a retribution for all this. There is no concession and no exception in this regard.

This theme is explained in the Qur'ân – explicitly at some places and implicitly at others. The Qur'ân relates stories of nations, kingdoms and great tyrants. It also relates stories of weak and oppressed peoples."

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*.

The eternal law of "survival of the most beneficial"

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ، كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ.

"As for the scum, it dries away. As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land. In this way Allâh expounds the parables." (Sûrah ar-Ra'd, verse 17)

The law of Allâh ﷻ that is existing and continuing in this universe, this law which we learn by studying the Qur'ân, and this law which we learn from history is this: the law of "survival of the most beneficial". At present, the law which the world accepts is the law of "survival of the fittest". However, the fact of the matter is that what we learn from the Qur'ân is the law of "survival of the most beneficial". The Qur'ân clearly and categorically states:

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ، كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ.

"As for the scum, it dries away. As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land. In this way Allâh expounds the parables." (Sûrah ar-Ra'd, verse 17)

A thing which has no benefit, a thing which has no message, a thing which is not providing any important service, a thing which is not confined to the existence, proliferation, comfort and progress of man is referred to by the Qur'ân as زبـد – scum. This is a very comprehensive word which has a very wide and deep meaning. This word is filled with meaning. The word زبـد refers to scum. In other words, it refers to the foam of the ocean which has no body, which has no capability of permanence and stability. It is merely a product of the force and movement of the ocean. It is merely an external appearance that comes as a result of the force and movement of the ocean. It has no stability, it has no capability. It is merely a bloated thing which is filled with air. Or, we could say that the filth and grime that was beneath the surface has now come onto the surface. It does not have the potential to benefit man in any way. It will either

flow on the surface or go to shore and attach itself to something. It will not remain because it does not have the potential and means to remain.

The law of Allâh ﷻ does not permit this "scum" to remain very long. This is because this universe is not so extensive as to permit this "scum" to remain. If the scum and foam of all the oceans and rivers were to remain, it would become difficult for those who were meant to continue existing to exist any further.

وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ – As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land.

There are many nations which were totally annihilated. However, there are many other nations which exist till today despite suffering many defeats. The Muslims were defeated at the hands of the Tartars. However, because the Muslims had this quality of ما ينفع الناس – that which benefits man, because they bear a message and because they possess a living call, the Tartars had to submit before them. Although the Muslims initially submitted to the Tartars, the swords of the Tartars, the hearts of the Tartars and the minds of the Tartars had to submit before the beneficial qualities of the Muslims, they had to submit before the message of the Muslims. This is because time only understands the language of "benefit". This is the language of the "right to existence". This is the divine and eternal law of Allâh ﷻ which is mentioned in this verse of the Qur'ân.

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ، كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ.

"As for the scum, it dries away. As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land. In this way Allâh expounds the parables." (Sûrah ar-Ra'd, verse 17)

If you become a physical embodiment of "as for that which benefits man, it remains in the land", you will establish your right to life, you will develop the quality of benfitting within

you. In other words, you will display your essential nature. You will prove that there is a need for life which cannot be completed without you. Therefore, no tyrannical and despotic hand, no oppressive hand, no revolution and no change will be able to obliterate your mark. The truth of the matter is that there is no revolution for you, there is no change for you. This is because you have proven your benefit and your advantage. And there is a special guarantee from Allâh ﷻ for that person who proves his benefit via the path of religion.

It is for this reason that Rasûlullâh ﷺ made this supplication [before the battle of Badr]:

اللهم إن تهلك هذه العصابة لن تعبد

O Allâh! Your worship is confined to this group. Your oneness *tauḥîd* is confined to this group. You may also prove that if the Muslims do not exist [in this world], this world will remain meaningless or it will become defective. The least that will happen is that there will be a vacuum which none will be able to fill.

Allâh's decision with the despondent humanity

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَّعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ، وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ

"It is He who sends down rain after they had lost all hope, and He spreads His mercy. He alone is the executor of all matters, worthy of all praise." (Sûrah ash-Shûrâ, verse 28)

This verse has guided me greatly. The Qur'ân always guides a person and removes him from difficulty. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَّعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ، وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ

Allâh ﷻ is the one who sends down rain. In reality, the word "rain" does not fully translate the Arabic word غيث . The word غيث actually refers to something that comes to one's help at the exact time when it is needed, which removes a difficulty at the exact time, which responds to one's call, which comes to one's assistance.

So Allâh ﷻ says that just as a sick person who is on the throes of death is infused with a few drops of life and some means for his life are provided, in like manner, a thirsty, dry, arid and scorched piece of land is provided with drops of rain by Allâh ﷻ.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَّعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا – He responds to the call and provides the means for life for people after they had become despondent. Their eyes remain staring at the skies. They look at the skies with much longing and remorse. That Allâh ﷻ should send His rain upon this dry, arid land and thereby turn it into green, lush land.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَّعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ، وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ

He spreads the wings of His mercy, causes the winds of His mercy to blow and He alone is the executor of all matters, worthy of all praise.

The attributes that are chosen here are also full of meaning. All the names of Allâh ﷻ are the best names – ولله الأسماء الحسنى – Allâh ﷻ has the most beautiful names and the best attributes. However, the attributes الولي الحميد have been chosen here because they have a special relationship with this theme and with man's reliance on Allâh ﷻ.

To whom does this humanity belong? It belongs to Allâh ﷻ. He is the executer of its affairs and He alone is its inheritor. No person can bear to see his orchard dry and arid. No one can bear to see his farmed land becoming dry. Allâh ﷻ is the الولي – He is the master over man and His creator as well. And He is الحميد – He is worthy of praise. He has the status of being praiseworthy. He has the attribute of being the praiseworthy. It is not becoming of His high status to abandon His creation and leave it helpless.

Good deeds are rewarded ten-fold while punishment for evil deeds is the like thereof

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلاَ يُجْزَى إِلاَّ مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُوْنَ

"Whoever comes with one good deed, for him is ten times the like thereof. And whoever comes with one evil deed, he will be punished the like thereof. And they shall not be wronged." (Sûrah al-An'âm, verse 160)

This is a very great glad-tiding from Allâh ﷻ: مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا - "Whoever comes with one good deed, for him is ten times the like thereof." مَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلاَ يُجْزَى إِلاَّ مِثْلَهَا – "And whoever comes with one evil deed, he will be punished the like thereof." وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُوْنَ – "And they shall not be wronged."

The law throughout the world is that if a good deed is done, a person is rewarded the equivalent thereof, he is given equal to it. He is rewarded according to the size, extent and weight of that good deed. And if a person commits a crime, makes a mistake, the retribution and punishment is equivalent to it. There is thus equivalence in both reward and punishment. The law that is applied to one is applied to others as well. All the constitutions of the world and all the systems of the world follow this principle. Obviously, there are certain exceptions based on specific reasons.

However, Allâh ﷻ made this law for Himself that for a single good deed, He will give ten rewards. And for a single evil deed, He will punish the equivalent thereof.

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلاَ يُجْزَى إِلاَّ مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُوْنَ

"Whoever comes with one good deed, for him is ten times the like thereof. And whoever comes with one evil deed, he will be punished the like thereof. And they shall not be wronged." (Sûrah al-An'âm, verse 160)

This is solely the grace of Allâh ﷻ and His mercy. This is done in view of man's weakness, his limitation, and his being prone to errors and mistakes. Had Allâh ﷻ applied the same rule to sins, i.e. ten forms of punishment for one sin, ten forms of retribution for one sin, then man would not be able to exist any longer. This is because more sins than good are committed. However, Allâh ﷻ made this law that there will be ten rewards for good while the punishment for evil will be the equivalent thereof. This is solely the grace and kindness of Allâh ﷻ.

وهم لا يظلمون – and they shall not be wronged. It will not happen that if man committed evil, Allâh will become displeased with him and totally annihilate him. This is because He is the creator, He is the one who shows kindness, He is the one who purifies. When a mistake is made by something which you make yourself, you become very angry. When your own student makes a mistake, when your own child makes a mistake, when your own worker makes a mistake, you become more angry. Allâh ﷻ therefore said: "and they shall not be wronged".

Allâh ﷻ will not look at the fact that He brought man from non-existence into existence. That He gave him power, that He gave him life, that He gave him a body, a brain, a heart. He did not display any shortcomings in giving all this. When he commits a sin, he ought to be punished. He ought to be wiped out so that he will not be disobedient again. Allâh ﷻ had the right to do all this as well. But, He says: "and they shall not be wronged".

The guarantee for success is not based on desires but on facts and realities

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلاَ أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ. مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْءً يُجْزَ بِهِ

"It is neither based on your desires nor the desires of the people of the Book. Whoever does evil shall be punished for it." (Sûrah an-Nisâ, verse 123)

The difference between desires and facts

Two things have existed in this world since eternity. These are part of human psychologies and the human temperament. One is desires and the other is facts. This is the norm of Allâh ﷻ and the conclusion of human intellect as well that the destinies of nations and peoples in this world, that their fate, and I go one step forward to say that religions and the relationship of Allâh ﷻ with them and with regard to their women – are all connected with facts and realities, and **not** with desires. You will find these two things mentioned separately in the Qur'ân.

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلاَ أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ. مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْءً يُجْزَ بِهِ

This verse guides us with regard to both these things. As far as desires are concerned – be they from the moral, the intellectual, the religious and the spiritual level – irrespective of how respectful and worthy of honour they may be – decisions and conclusions are not based on desires. ليس بأمانيكم – this is also the wisdom of the Qur'ân that before saying ولا أمـاني أهل الكتاب , Allâh ﷻ said ليس بأمانيكم – so that one does not think that as far as the deviated religions are concerned, what conclusions and decisions can be drawn from their desires? What value do their desires have? ليس بأمانيكم is therefore said first. You yourself can see who the addressee is. The addressees of the latter generations come later on. They are of a secondary level. Here the addressees are the Sahâbah ﷺ. They are those senior people

who participated in the battle of Badr and the Bay'ah ar-Ridwân. They are the *'Asharah Mubashsharah* – the ten Sahâbah ﷺ who were given glad tidings of paradise in this world. They are all addressed and told ليس بأمانيكم – it is neither based on your desires ولا بأماني أهل الكتاب – nor on the desires of the people of the Book. It is Our eternal law that من يعمل سوء يجز به – whoever does evil shall be punished for it. In other words, the consequences of deeds will come to the fore. If we take this in the general sense, then this will not be confined to the hereafter alone. Rather, it is applicable to this conceptual world and to the hereafter as well. It is Our law that whatever deed you do, the recompense [or retribution] thereof will certainly come to the fore.

Survival of the most beneficial

The concept of "survival of the fittest" has always been an accepted principle of this world, more so in modern times and especially in the West.

Survival of the most beneficial – i.e. something that is good and beneficial will remain. The foundations for this can be found in religious scriptures and in the statements of religious people. The Qur'ân goes one step further in this regard. This is more appropriate to Qur'ânic and Islamic sentiments. So this other law is that of "survival of the most beneficial". Allâh ﷻ says in the Qur'ân:

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ.

"As for the scum, it dries away. As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land." (Sûrah ar-Ra'd, verse 17)

There is a wisdom in this which is worthy of consideration. It is extremely difficult to decide بقاء الأصلح - "the survival of the best". The word أصلح is actually a noun denoting preference.

From among the good things, you have to decide what is the best. You do not decide what is the best from among the harmful and detrimental things. So بقاء أصلح will mean – to decide what is the best from among the good things. The beneficial things which have the right to exist, which can survive the confrontations of life. Now from among these good things, which is the best? Who is going to decide this? Which court is going to decide this? Human nature has always been such that it is very quick in deciding what is beneficial.

Deciding what is beneficial

In every era, in the era of the peak of knowledge and progress and even in the era of the lowest ebb of knowledge and progress, man has always had that ability of deciding what is beneficial. So in His Book (since this Book is a Book for humanity, this Book has been given to the entire human race, this Book encompasses all levels – be they intellectual, academic, spiritual or practical) Allâh ﷻ did not leave it to "survival of the best" but showed the principle of "survival of the most beneficial".

Even a child can understand that a certain thing is more beneficial for him, that he derives more comfort from it. This is his experience with his parents. He considers them to be most beneficial. He considers his relatives to be of benefit. According to Shâh Walî Allâh *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*, if a child is not totally devoid of intelligence, he will understand that a person who is more learned, who is more experienced, and who is more intelligent will be of more benefit to him. Survival of the most beneficial is a principle which helps the human race, which has helped every era of human history and every progeny of the human race.

So the Qur'ân says:

who participated in the battle of Badr and the Bay'ah ar-Ridwân. They are the *'Asharah Mubashsharah* – the ten Sahâbah ﷺ who were given glad tidings of paradise in this world. They are all addressed and told ليس بأمانيكم – it is neither based on your desires ولا بأماني أهل الكتاب – nor on the desires of the people of the Book. It is Our eternal law that من يعمل سوء يجز به – whoever does evil shall be punished for it. In other words, the consequences of deeds will come to the fore. If we take this in the general sense, then this will not be confined to the hereafter alone. Rather, it is applicable to this conceptual world and to the hereafter as well. It is Our law that whatever deed you do, the recompense [or retribution] thereof will certainly come to the fore.

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"As for the scum, it dries away. As for that which benefits man, it remains in the land." (Sûrah ar-Ra'd, verse 17)

I have mentioned this prelude that desires and facts are two things. There is a major error on the national, governmental, personal and general level of the masses that they are more attached to desires as compared to facts and realities.

The inability to correctly perceive the facts and the inability to fulfill their demands has caused the downfall of major powers of this world – the Roman empire, the Persian empire, the powerful and extensive caliphate of Spain, the caliphate of the Abbasids, and later on, the kingdom of Khwârizm Shâh. If we were to study their history and cast a glance at their downfall, we will see that they turned a blind eye to the facts and realities.

A climate of love is created for the pious servants of Allâh ﷻ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

Allâh ﷻ says: "Surely (those who have faith and did righteous deeds, the Merciful shall create love for them." (Sûrah Maryam, verse)

The word رحمن is used in this verse. In other words, love which entails mercy as well. Allâh ﷻ shall create an environment of such love in favour of His servants. And to what extent? The commentators consider this to mean that Allâh ﷻ shall love them. However, the more correct meaning is that Allâh ﷻ shall create love for them in the hearts of His creation. A Hadîth-e-Qudsî states: "When Allâh ﷻ loves a certain servant of His, He says to Jibra'îl, 'I love a certain servant of mine. You should also love him.' Jibra'îl ﷺ conveys this to the other angels. The angels of the upper heavens convey this to those of the lower level. This is conveyed lower and lower till love for this person permeates the fish of the oceans and the ants in their holes."

I have witnessed this with my own eyes. Through His grace, Allâh ﷻ has shown us how far reaching love for His beloved and accepted servants is. This love is such that the hearts become totally subdued. This is such a historical fact and is witnessed in such a way that it cannot be rejected.

I have seen a few pious personalities both in India and in the Arab countries. It seems that there is a special system whereby love for them is placed in the hearts of the people and that they are made to drink this love. In other words, it seems like something is in a tumbler which is given to all of them to drink. The people do not even know that they are made to drink this. There is no one responsible for this also. Nor is there anyone who is organizing all this. This love for these pious personalities develops in the hearts of its own accord. This is just like the effect of the climate. Like the change in the climate

which is subtle. Or like the fragrance of a flower or a blossom. In like manner, that fragrance reaches the people. Now, the greater the personality, the further that fragrance will reach.

I have seen a few pious personalities. Many great people of Lahore used to come to Maulânâ Aḥmad 'Alî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* before the partition of India and Pakistan. They would lower their heads in his assembly while he would deliver his lecture. In one of his lectures he addressed the people saying: "O people of Lahore! Aḥmâd 'Alî is here in Lahore for so many days that he is dying to see people of îmân. You have everything but people of îmân are very few." There were those who used to sit on the roads while people of the mountainous regions would come to him. It seemed as though someone went and gave them something to drink [of the love of this pious man].

In India, I saw my spiritual mentor, Maulânâ 'Abdul Qâdir Raipuri *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Let alone from India to Pakistan, even in the Ḥijâz (Mecca and Medina) he enjoyed great respect and extreme love of the people. In like manner, I saw Maulânâ Muḥammad Ilyâs *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* without any pomp and show. Similar was the case with Maulânâ Madanî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Eventually I also saw Maulânâ Ashraf 'Alî Thanwî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. I visited him. There too I saw large groups of people coming to him. Great *'ulamâ'* were also coming to meet him. His door is closed. Everyone is waiting outside. Many of them are sitting while many are standing. All of them are waiting for the door to open so that they could enter. I remember that even the greatest of *'ulamâ'* were present there. Even the most distinguished people were present there. All of them are sitting with their heads lowered in respect waiting to hear something from the Maulânâ.

Now what is all this about? سيجعل لهم الرحمن ودا – the love that Allâh ﷻ, the Merciful, placed in the hearts of the people for these

pious servants will have a tinge of mercy, it will be mixed with mercy.

There is a love that is devoid of mercy. There is love, but there is no mercy in it. A person wants to show his love even if it hurts him to do so. Very often it is noticed that in their display of love, in matters related to love, people suffered from physical pain. In showing love to someone, we might impose upon them. We will hold on to them. We will force them to lie down. We will force them to come to our house. We will invite them to a meal and force them to eat something even if they are abstaining from that particular food [due to health or other reasons].

This is that love with which there is mercy. سيجعل لهم الرحمن ودا – the love that is placed in the hearts of the people for these pious personalities is mixed with mercy. So that they may do whatever they are asked, they may remain, they may derive benefit from them and thereby experience some comfort.

Now each word of the Qur'ân entails an entire world behind it. It entails an entire library. This cannot be encompassed by any book of *tafsîr* nor by any language. The word وُدًّا is an indefinite word. In other words, it will have different types which cannot be encompassed. It will also have different levels and stages. It will be of different percentages – 100%, 90%, 80%, 70%, etc. Allâh ﷻ will certainly create a certain type of love.

There are also different forms of love. There is the love of a person treating a sick person. There is the love of parents. There is the love of a teacher. There is the love of a friend. Allâh ﷻ will create love for each person appropriate to that person.

The effects and manifestations of human endeavour

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعى. وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرى. ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الأَوْفى.

"And that man only receives what he earned. And that his earning will certainly be shown [to him]. He will then be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense." (Sûrah an-Najm, verses 39-41)

A rejuvenating message

These verses not only give courage to the Muslims but to the entire human race and to all those who have a correct purpose in life, who are flag bearers of some beneficial call, who wish to endeavour and work for some sort of good, who have stood up for some noble objective. These verses have a message of a new life for all of them. And it has a special message for our centres of learning, for our centres that are engaged in the work of reformation, and especially for those centres wherein are our youth, wherein are our children – whose lives have just started and whose ships have just commenced sailing. So these verses have a *modus operandi* for them and provides them with a lighting way.

Allâh ﷻ says that man shall only receive according to the extent of his efforts and endeavours. Allâh ﷻ then says in that special style of the Qur'ân: وأن سعيه سوف يرى – and that his earning will certainly be shown [to him]. This is also a miracle of the Qur'ân that the word سوف is used. This word is generally used to show something in the late future. This means that if you do not see any results quickly, there is no need for you to become despondent. سوف يرى – it will certainly be shown. All that we see in this world – the establishment of empires, the rise of cultures, the proliferation of knowledge and sciences, the birth of exceptional people – are all results and consequences of

human effort and endeavour. These are all a commentary of this verse of the Qur'ân.

The results of endeavour will certainly be seen

The responsibility of protecting the identity of the *ummah* is a duty of the *ummah* it self. The Qur'ân is not addressing the individual alone. This law of Allâh ﷻ applies to every individual and every nation:

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعى

"And that man only receives what he earned."

Man shall only receive in this life and in the hereafter equal to what he did. His efforts and earnings will come in his share. The results of his efforts and earnings will come to him. Among some of the decisions which have been predetermined by Allâh ﷻ and among those Qur'ânic facts and realities which are eternal, is this one fact and reality:

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعى

"And that man only receives what he earned."

This is what Allâh ﷻ is saying. When He Himself is saying that effort and endeavour are prerequisites, and that it is only the endeavours of man that will come as results, then what can any other person say? There is nothing for man except that for which he made an endeavour. وأن سعيه سوف يرى – and that his earning will certainly be shown to him. The results of his endeavours will be shown to him. He will be made to see with his own eyes that these are the results of his endeavours.

Allâh ﷻ then conveys a very great glad tiding. ثم يجزاه الجزاء الأوفى - He will then be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense. You ought to know that the word الأوفى – is in the superlative tense. So the person will then be recompensed with the fullest

recompense. He will be given the most recompense. So the first thing is that man's endeavour will not go to waste. There will be a result and a consequence of his endeavour. The result of this endeavour of his will be more than what he expected, more than what he deserved, far more than the amount of his endeavour. Allâh ﷻ gives this glad tiding that this is what will happen. The entire history also testifies to this. The history of knowledge testifies to this, the history of reformation testifies to this, the history of social welfare testifies to this, the history of research and penmanship testifies to this, the history of reformational works testifies to this – they all testify that not only at certain times, but most of the time, the results are far more than the actual endeavour. The results far out weigh the actual extent and size of the endeavour. Can there be a glad tiding greater than this?

If you grasp this point and inscribe it onto your heart that if we endeavour, there will certainly be a result for this endeavour, there is hope that it will be more than the endeavour itself, it will be more than what was envisaged, that this does not need any large place, it is not in need of any great centre of learning, it is not in need of any great and noble family, it is not in need of very highly qualified teachers, it is not in need of a very extensive library – rather it is in need of endeavour, it is in need of intention, it is in need of seriousness, it is in need of trustworthyness.

When endeavour is joined with good intention and character, these will never go to waste. Allâh ﷻ is the knower of the unseen and He is the absolute power. To be the knower of the unseen is in itself a very great thing. But He is also the absolute power and the knower of the unseen as well. He is the true informer and He is also the Sustainer of the universe. So He is saying, He is making this announcement, and He is giving this guarantee: وأن سعيه سوف يرى – and that his earning will certainly be

shown to him. Now there is no need for Him to say anything else. There is nothing that can be added to this.

This is a rejuvenating message. It is for all the human progenies and for all the eras of history – that human endeavour will certainly prove to be fruitful, that its effects and results will certainly be witnessed.

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الأَوْفَى

"He will then be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense."

A leading light and a constitution

There is a total message in this verse of the Qur'ân. The message for this entire life is in this verse. How should one spend one's life? What means should a person have for this life? Whether it is a religious life, an intellectual life, a propagational life, a reformational life – all sorts of preparations will have to be made for it. And what will the results be of these preparations? This is because it is also in the nature of man that he wants to know what the benefit is. He wants to know what the benefit is in a certain effort. What is the effect of a certain medication? What are the components of a certain seed? What are the demands for a certain field of work? To ask such questions is in the nature of man.

Allâh ﷻ instilled this verse in my mind and placed it in my heart. The system for one's entire life is in this verse. An entire code of law is in it. You should try to understand this verse, make it your way of life and make it your life. You should believe in the truthfulness of this verse, have conviction in it and let it settle in your heart. This is because this is the word of Allâh ﷻ. It is the statement of Allâh ﷻ. Even if all the wise men of this world and all the intellectuals of this world were to say that if you do a certain thing, this will be the result of it, then we cannot rely on them 100%. It is as a result of my life

experience and my study of history that the predictions of many men proved to be wrong, that the many benefits enumerated by them with regard to certain things proved to be wrong. The entire history is filled with this. But if Allâh ﷻ says that this is the result of this, if you do this, this will be the result of it, then it is impossible for it to happen against this.

It is therefore said that you should make it your way of life. Make it your guiding light and tread in its light.

The fruitfulness and productivity of human endeavour that is mentioned in this verse is a very encouraging and rejuvenating message. 'Allâmah Iqbâl *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* had said:

"It is through one's deeds that this life is made. And so is paradise and hell. This product of soil [man] neither has the qualities of light [angels] nor that of fire [jinn]."

Knowledge too has a special law

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا، وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا. وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ.

The need for a correct path

Those who are studying *tafsîr*, who have commenced with a book of *tafsîr* or have at least studied the commentary of Sûrah al-Baqarah know that during *jâhilî* times those who used to go for hajj had adopted a way that was innovated by themselves. It was not in the Sharî'ah. They imposed upon themselves that as long as they have not completed their hajj, and as long as they are engaged in the rites of hajj, and there arose the need for them to go to their houses, they would not enter their houses from the doors. They felt that since they have not left the house of Allâh ﷻ as yet [i.e. they have not completed the hajj as yet], it would therefore not be appropriate to enter through the doors. They would therefore enter through the roof or by jumping over the wall – مـن ظهورها – from the back. They used to consider this to be a very virtuous deed and a mark of respect to the house of Allâh ﷻ.

Allâh ﷻ says:

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا

"Righteousness is not that you enter the houses from theirs backs."

وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا

"Rather, righteousness is of that person who fears. And enter the houses from their designated doors."

This is the rule, this is what sound intellect demands, this is what sound judgement demands. It is also the law of Allâh ﷻ that a person should enter from the entrance. The Qur'ân is a

book for one's entire life. It is a constitution and a guiding light for one's entire life. It is a guide for every class, for every occupation, for every field, for every stage. These words of the Qur'ân are very important: وأتـــو البـــيوت من أبوابها . They encompass one's entire life. It provides the wisdom for the entire life. It is not confined to entering the house. Rather, it is applicable to everything, i.e. in every matter, you enter through the entrance that is assigned to it. For example, a person wants to learn a certain craft. But he does not study it under a teacher of that craft. He does not pay any attention to the protocol of that craft. He does not obtain the tools and instruments of that craft. He does not learn this craft gradually and in stages. So much so that he does not even wear the uniform of that craft. Iron mongers have a certain uniform. Water carriers have a certain uniform. The police have a certain uniform. Doctors have a certain uniform. So at times, even a uniform is necessary or else a person will not succeed in his craft. He will not learn that craft and that skill.

If someone says that these are all futile talks. We want to learn the craft of the iron monger, or we want to join the army. But we are not prepared to enter any discussion about uniform and as to what we can wear and what we cannot wear. This order to march left and right [in the army] is also a waste of time. We e going to use our intelligence. We will initiate something w. Such people will remain as they are. They cannot become ood soldiers. In like manner, they cannot become iron mongers. They cannot become carpenters. This rule applies to all of them as well: وأتو البيوت من أبوابها – enter the houses from their designated doors.

This وأتـــو البـــيوت من أبوابها – enter the houses from their designated doors - encompasses one's entire religious and worldly life. Allâh ﷻ, human nature and sound intellect have through numerous years of experience have laid down certain

principles, have explained different entrances and exits. If a person does not restrict himself to them and does not respect them, then he can never succeed. He can never achieve his goal. For example, a person says that the letters of the alphabet are very strange. There is no need to learn them. He would rather start reading directly. Irrespective of how intelligent he may be, he will never learn to read. If a person cannot recognize the letters *alif, bâ, tâ,* etc. or the letters *a, b, c,* he will not be able to speak for even a single second. You can try this out at any time you want. Take a person who is unable to read and write, who is totally illiterate. Give him a book of any language, or even of his own language, and tell him, let alone one night, you will give him an entire month. No person will be permitted to go near him. He will be locked in a room. His food and drink will be provided to him through the window. He will be alone in the room with that book. All the other necessities of life will be provided in that room from before hand. Let alone one month, he may live there for six months. He should try and solve one page of that book. He must be able to read it. And this person had not learnt the letters of the alphabet. You can be certain that when he comes out from that room six months later, he will be just as illiterate as when he entered that room. This is because he did not practise on the order وأتـــو البيوت من أبوابها – enter the houses from their designated doors. He thought that the letters of the alphabet were very insignificant. That they were not important at all. That *alif, bâ, tâ*, are taught to children. However, the great scholars like Imâm Ghazzâlî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and Imâm Râzî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* also had to learn the letters of the alphabet. It is only then that they could write such great books like *Iḥyâ' 'Ulûm ad-Dîn* and *at-Tafsîr al-Kabîr*. They would never have been able to write these books had they not learnt the letters of the alphabet.

In like manner, every skill, every branch of knowledge and every department has a certain law. You will have to follow

that law. First of all, our knowledge is only knowledge. Many other things are attached to it. We think that our world is separate and their world is separate. But if you look carefully you will see that a major portion of worldly knowledge is mixed with religious knowledge. For example, to study in stages, to study under a teacher, to work hard in your studies, to respect your teacher, etc.

The distinction of religious knowledge

Although there are related matters in these two types of knowledge, there is a borderline which separates the two. What is that line? For example, we seek the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ, there must be sincerity, there must be supplication to Allâh ﷻ that we are doing whatever we can, it is in His power to bestow whatever knowledge He wants.

You should remember this poem of Imâm Shâfi'î *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*:

شكوت إلى وكيع سوء حفظي – فأوصاني إلى ترك المعاصي

بأن العلم نور من إله – ونور الله لا يعطى لعاصي

"I complained to my teacher, Waki', about my weak memory. He said to me to abstain from sins. That I should stay far from sins. This is because knowledge is a light from Allâh ﷻ. And this light of Allâh ﷻ is not given to a sinner."

This is the separating line. This knowledge of ours which we are seeking has certain special etiquette. This is not the knowledge of showing off one's physical strength, whereby a person asks who is this teacher that you are asking me to respect? What is this respect for books? What are these old and antiquated things you are talking about? Allâh ﷻ has given us intelligence. He has given us a memory. We are making our effort. Our health is good. We can therefore do as we wish and show out talents. No. This is not how it is.

There were those of lesser capabilities who became extremely successful and left their mark in this world. I remember a person in Lahore. He had adopted an incorrect path and was teaching in a college. His intelligence and his skills in logic were fully accepted. So much so that even Dr. Iqbâl [the famous poet] used to acknowledge him. However, the benefit that should have been conveyed by him, the sciences and the Sunnah that ought to have been transmitted by him, the dissemination that ought to have taken place at his hands, the humility that people ought to have developed by sitting in his company was not developed. He began saying: "Maulwî Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanî was my class mate. He was enumerated among the dim-witted students. He was not an outstanding student." This person was an outstanding student. But of what benefit was he? Despite his intelligence? Similarly, there was a person who said: "This Maulânâ Ilyâs only engages in optional (*nafl*) ṣalâh, [he does nothing else]. Even in his student days he only used to engage in optional ṣalâh. What has he really done?" He has shaken this world with his call. So much so that his call is fully accepted even in Africa and America.

So I am telling you from experience. Even if a person has little potential, but if he acts on this verse وأتــوا البيوت من أبوابها – enter the houses from their designated doors – he will be able to reach those high ranks that cannot be reached by people who are proud of their intelligence, who are proud of their ability to study, who are proud of their abilities. There will be no blessings in their studying and teaching in the sense that people will not benefit from them. Together with knowledge, there must be a proliferation of the Sunnah, an obliteration of *bid'ah* (innovation), an abhorrence of disobedience, a desire for obedience, there must be the coming of enlightenment. These things will not happen just like that. They will only happen when a person follows the way shown by his teacher.

Once there was a very great person of Syria by the name of 'Allâmah Bayṭâr. He narrates that on one occasion they could not go by their teacher because it was severely cold. It gets extremely cold in Syria. Snow also falls there. He says: "We had no alternative but not to go. When we went to him later on [when there was a respite in the cold], he asked us: 'Why did you not come?' We replied that it was severely cold. He brought a huge bucket of water and poured it onto us, and said: 'This is what is really cold.' We bore this patiently and did not complain. We then continued studying under him." This is how this person became the great 'Allâmah Bayṭâr. This was directly related to us by him, or by one of his contemporaries.

This was the way of learning at that time. The teacher would accept the services of his students and teach them as well. The teacher was not a teacher alone. He was like a spiritual guide. They would remain in his company and learn how to perform ṣalâh. What is the meaning of humility and humbleness. To what extent is the student abiding to the Sunnah. When he enters the mosque, which foot does he place first. When he leaves the mosque, which foot does he place first. These are the things that students used to learn from their teachers. Nowadays, these things have become very rare.

It all boils down to the same thing - وأتو البيوت من أبوابها – that when you want to enter the house of knowledge, you must do so from the door of knowledge. What is this door of knowledge? It entails following those rules and regulations, it entails showing respect, it entails following the system, it entails studying, it entails toiling and working hard.

These are a few words which I wanted to say. It is not a very long story. If this verse is acted on, then the law of Allâh ﷻ is applicable today just as it was for thousands of years.

Divine power and wisdom in the sequence of the coming of the four caliphs

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِيْ لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا، ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ

"The sun runs in its fixed orbit. This is the decree of the all-mighty, the all-knowing [Allâh]."
(Sûrah Yâsîn, verse 38)

The sun runs in its fixed orbit. It moves towards the fixed place of rising and setting which Allâh ﷻ appointed for it. This is the decree, system and law of that Master who is all-mighty and all-knowing as well. He is the creator of this system and the one who laid down this system.

If a person is only mighty, it is not necessary that his system and his calculation will be based on wisdom. He may resort solely to his strength. But his entire outcome and end result will not necessarily be based on wisdom. It is also possible that the one who is issuing the order may be very knowledgeable, but he does not have the strength and power. In such a case it will be difficult to complete his task.

This blessed verse relates the sytem of the sun – that it moves from a set point and goes towards a set point by the will of Allâh ﷻ, and that it completes its journey by the power of Allâh ﷻ and in accordance with His knowledge. In the light that it entails, the sun of prophet-hood, the sun of the true religion, the sun of *da'wah* can all be understood from the system of this material sun. In this regard too there are no coincidences. They all move according to the will of Allâh ﷻ, according to His command, and according to His wisdom. Their system moves in subservience to Him.

Look at this system of deputyship that is popularly known as *khilâfah-e-râshidah* – the caliphate of the four rightly guided caliphs. When Rasûlullâh ﷺ departed from this world, the

personalities that came onto the seat of caliphate, the sequence in which they came, the opportunity that Allâh ﷻ gave them in fulfilling the responsibilities of this caliphate – all these are a manifestation of the words ذلـك تقدير العزيز العليم - This is the decree of the all-mighty, the all-knowing [Allâh]. Allâh ﷻ enabled this system to run in such a sequence and in such an arrangement that it is an example of His all-encompassing mercy, His absolute wisdom and His absolute power.

The first need is safeguarding the religion

The history of religions and creeds shows that the most essential thing for these religions is the task of protecting and safeguarding them. The person who first came with the religion, the manner in which he brought it, the status that he gave to certain aspects, the position that he gave to certain things, the sequence that he accorded to them – all this has to be maintained by that person's deputy. This deputy cannot permit any changes in the least. This is the most essential and important task. The fate of religions is confined to who is the person who comes after the Prophet – after the person who first came with the religion. Who is that person who is going to ensure that the religion remains and is maintained in its original form, in its correct order and that its teachings be accorded the importance that they deserve?

After perfect îmân, after the true recognition of Allâh ﷻ, after absolute *tauḥîd*, the best quality a person can possess is the quality of having a true desire to safeguard the religion, and to have an extreme desire to maintain the teachings of the Prophet. There are other qualities that come later on and which hold their own position. But the first condition to which the existence of religion is confined is that the deputy of the Prophet, the person entrusted with guiding the *ummah* can be whatever he is, but with regard to the religion he has to be a person who is most desirous of protecting what is sacred or

inviolable. There cannot be anyone more perceptive than him, more sensitive than him, more discerning than him, and more desirous than him of safeguarding every minute aspect.

The history of all religions shows that they became a prey to alterations and distortions, that they changed their form very quickly, that they fell onto a different path [different from their original path] because after the departure of those who brought those religions, they did not have a deputy like Abû Bakr ﷺ. They did not have a trustworthy, loyal and self-respecting deputy like him. What position did Abû Bakr ﷺ have? His attributes, his excellent qualities, his virtues, his justice, his piety, his relationship with Allâh ﷻ, his abstinence, his giving preference to others over himself – all this can be seen in the books of biographies and in the Aḥâdîth.

However, his greatest and overriding quality which was needed the most right at the beginning was his *ghayrah* – his sense of honour for Islam, his sharp perception, his desire to safeguard every minute point, and his unwavering determination and decision to fulfil the will of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. This is his special attribute and a distinct quality of his life. In this regard we can say that practising on Islam which we see today, the *shar'î* injunctions that are alive today, the *ummah* which is safeguarded from distortion as a whole – all this is a result and a manifestation of Abû Bakr's ﷺ extreme passion to safeguard Islam. The debt of all this is owed to his first caliphate.

The *ghayrah* which Abû Bakr ﷺ had for Islam was the *ghayrah* which a person has for his own honour and respect. This was his greatest attribute and his essential quality. This was the greatest need of that time. This quality of his is displayed by that statement of his which has been recorded by history in his exact words. This statement itself shows from what type of heart it emanated. And with what faith and conviction it emanated. The statement is:

personalities that came onto the seat of caliphate, the sequence in which they came, the opportunity that Allâh ﷻ gave them in fulfilling the responsibilities of this caliphate – all these are a manifestation of the words ذلـك تقدير العزيز العليم - This is the decree of the all-mighty, the all-knowing [Allâh]. Allâh ﷻ enabled this system to run in such a sequence and in such an arrangement that it is an example of His all-encompassing mercy, His absolute wisdom and His absolute power.

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أينقص الدين وأنا حي

"Can Islam be permitted to be reduced while I am alive?!"

Let alone a single letter, can even a single dot of Allâh's religion be reduced before my eyes?

This is the thing which religions need first and foremost. This quality was found in Abû Bakr ﷺ to the level of perfection.

The second need is that the temperament of those bearing the religion should not change

The second need was now that the religion has been safeguarded, the bearers of the religion should also be safeguarded. The temperament and disposition of the first personalities, the most perfect examples, and those who were the religion's practical examples and perfect manifestations must not be able to change.

During that time, Rome, Syria and Iran were being conquered. The wealth and treasures of Egypt and Syria were coming into Medina in large numbers. It was being showered like rain. The Muslims were receiving things which they had never set eyes upon. There was now the danger of the *ummah* flowing away in this flood of civilization.

During this occasion, Allâh ﷻ brought forward a personality that was most distinguished in this quality and attribute. He said: "Never! This is impossible. The temperament of the Arabs and the Islamic nation cannot change in front of my eyes. They cannot become prey to this [foreign] civilization. They cannot fall into enjoyment, comforts and luxuries. He greatly emphasized and stressed upon the Arabs that they should remain steadfast on their simplicity, ruggedness, asceticism, contentment, and their old military and ascetic qualities.

Islamic conquests and the need for perfect individuals

What was the third thing that was necessary? The test of apostasy had come to an end. The doors of distortion had been shut. The system of human equality and justice had been established. The need was that if this Islamic state was to continue existing, the doors of good will have to remain open. Numerous nations will enter the circle of Islam. Many prominent and perfect individuals will be born. Many Allâh-fearing *'ulamâ'* will be born. Many imams and mujtahids will be born. People like Imâm Abû Ḥanîfah *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Imâm Mâlik *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Imâm Shâfi'î *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Imâm Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Many *Muḥaddithûn* will be born. People like Imâm Bukhârî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and Imâm Muslim *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Many legislators like Imâm Abû Yûsuf *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and Imâm Muḥammad *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*. Many conquerors like 'Uqbah ibn Nâfi' *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*, Ṭâriq ibn Ziyâd *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* and Muḥammad ibn Qâsim *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*.

Allâh ﷻ thus chose 'Uthmân ﷺ for this purpose. This is because most of his family members were conquerors, rulers and people of authority. When workers are blood relatives of the rulers and also people of the same place, they consider it to be their own. They do not think that they are mere workers and labourers. They are therefore worried about the well-being of their ruler. Under such circumstances, there was a need for Uthmân ﷺ. And so he came. History is testimony to the conquests that took place under his rule. Qabrus, a major portion of Africa, Azerbaijan, Istakhar, Sâbûr, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ṭabristan, Sijistan and Nayshâpûr were all conquered during his rule.

أينقص الدين وأنا حي

"Can Islam be permitted to be reduced while I am alive?!"

Let alone a single letter, can even a single dot of Allâh's religion be reduced before my eyes?

This is the thing which religions need first and foremost. This quality was found in Abû Bakr ﷺ to the level of perfection.

The second need is that the temperament of those bearing the religion should not change

The second need was now that the religion has been safeguarded, the bearers of the religion should also be safeguarded. The temperament and disposition of the first personalities, the most perfect examples, and those who were the religion's practical examples and perfect manifestations must not be able to change.

During that time, Rome, Syria and Iran were being conquered. The wealth and treasures of Egypt and Syria were coming into Medina in large numbers. It was being showered like rain. The Muslims were receiving things which they had never set eyes upon. There was now the danger of the *ummah* flowing away in this flood of civilization.

During this occasion, Allâh ﷻ brought forward a personality that was most distinguished in this quality and attribute. He said: "Never! This is impossible. The temperament of the Arabs and the Islamic nation cannot change in front of my eyes. They cannot become prey to this [foreign] civilization. They cannot fall into enjoyment, comforts and luxuries. He greatly emphasized and stressed upon the Arabs that they should remain steadfast on their simplicity, ruggedness, asceticism, contentment, and their old military and ascetic qualities.

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The need for political acumen

Islam was now in total peace and security. There was no political, organized or military threat. The Muslims now ruled for quite some time. There were bound to be cultural influences. Political thought was bound to come – that a person thinks along political lines, that he decides that this is what is appropriate at this time, that this should be done at present, that this is politically correct, and this is what religion asks of us.

The need was that 'Alî ﷺ be brought. His essential quality and intrinsic distinction was that absolute religious principles be given preference over political principles and political benefits. That there is no concern whether the caliphate remains in his hands or not. That a certain thing is not appropriate over here. It should therefore be changed. That this should not be done here.

One of the distinctions of his caliphate was that he presented an example that during his time of internal strife and opposition from one's fellow Muslims, he remained steadfast on his principles and did not allow politics to gain an upperhand over religion. Imâm Abû Ḥanîfah *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* rightly said that had it not been for the era of 'Alî ﷺ, we would not have found an example of خير القرون – the best of eras. That what we should do at the time of internal strife and opposition from one's fellow Muslims.

This was that quality and feature which was needed to fill the fourth slot. Allâh ﷻ enabled this system to continue in this manner. This is the meaning of divine fate, this is the meaning of ذلك تقدير العزيز العليم - This is the decree of the all-mighty, the all-knowing [Allâh]. This is what I am referring to. Daily you see the sun rising from the east and setting in the west. This is not the sole proof of Allâh ﷻ being all-mighty and all-wise. It also entails the different stages which He appointed for the sun of prophet-hood, the different levels which He made it pass through, the manner in which He conveyed His religion

towards perfection, the deputies which He chose for His Prophet ﷺ, and the caliphs that He gave him. All this is also a manifestation of ذلك تقدير العزيز العليم .

CHAPTER 12

A LESSON AND AN ADMONITION

The Qur'ân is a talking and crystal clear mirror for nations, historical periods, different stages of life, different types and categories of life.

Whoever wishes so - be he an individual, a group, an organization, a family or a tribe – may see his image in that mirror. He can then decide for himself as to how he will be treated [by Allâh ﷻ]. Allâh ﷻ has no family relationship with anyone.

Maulânâ Abul Hasan 'Alî Nadwî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh.*

The difference between *jâhilîyyah* and Islam

The Qur'ân mentions *Jâhilîyyah* and Islam in its own eloquent manner. It shows the great difference that is found between these two.

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَآءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖ إِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ.

"Hold fast to the rope of Allâh altogether and do not sow dissension. Remember the bounty of Allâh upon you when you were enemies of one another, then He cast love in your hearts, now you became brothers by His grace. You were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. In this way Allâh expounds His verses to you so that you may be guided." (Sûrah Âl Imrân, verse 103)

أَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهٗ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِيْ بِهٖ فِي النَّاسِ

"He who was [previously] dead, We then gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks about among people."

The fact of the matter is that a better picture than this showing the difference between Islam and *jâhilîyyah* cannot be taken. The differences and peculiarities of both cannot be portrayed with such clarity and eloquence.

The entire history of *jâhilîyyah* and Islam is an explanation of these two verses and an elaboration of the gist that is in these two verses.

What is *jâhilîyyah*? It is a manifestation of "when you were enemies of one another" and "you were on the brink of a pit of fire".

What is Islam? It is an amplication of "then He cast love in your hearts" and a picture of "He saved you from it [the firē of hell]".

The most correct classification of even the most progressive person of the *jâhilî* era cannot be better than that what the

Qur'ân said. Nor can it be done in such eloquent words as said by the words أو من كان ميتا – He who was [previously] dead. If you want to paint a picture of an Islamic revolution, in fact, of all revolutions, you cannot find more eloquent words than these:

مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِۦ فِي ٱلنَّاسِ

"We then gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks about among people."

Allâh ﷻ is explaining this to us just as letters of the alphabet are taught to someone. Or just as basic sums [2+2=4] are taught to someone. أو من كان ميتا – He who was [previously] dead. فأحييناه – We then gave him life. Not only that, وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِۦ فِي ٱلنَّاسِ – "and We made for him a light with which he walks about among people". كمن مثله في الظلمات ليس بخارج منها – can he be like that person who is wandering about in the pits of darkness, unable to find a way out of it?

The emphasis on abstaining from *jâhilî* ways and customs

أَفَحُكْمَ ٱلْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ.

"Do they seek the judgement of the era of unbelief? Who is better than Allâh in judgement for those who have conviction?" (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 50)

I would like to say something about the word حُكْـم . I am going to say this as a person who has a special affinity with the Arabic language and as a student who has sifted through the treasures of the Arabic language. This word حكـم of the Qur'ân is a very wide and eloquent word. It is not confined to the meaning of a court judgement. It also has the meaning of "giving preference" and "choosing". To give preference to something or to choose something are also included among the meanings of حكـم . This word encompasses all these meanings. Allâh ﷻ says: "What! Do they give preference to the judgement of the era of unbelief? Do they give preference to the choice of the era of unbelief? Do they give preference to the inclinations of the era of unbelief? Do they give preference to the principles of the era of unbelief? Is this what they want?

ومـن أحسن من الله حكما لقوم يوقنون – who is better than Allâh as a judge for a people who have conviction?

The meaning of jâhilîyyah

The entire matter is that of the difference between Islam and *jâhilîyyah*. I am sorry to say this but even many of our educated brothers have forgotten the difference between Islam and *jâhilîyyah*. This is because they think that this *jâhilîyyah* has come to an end. Most of them think about the Arab *jâhilîyyah*. They think that there is no longer any conflict between Islam and *jâhilîyyah*. They feel that it is a waste of time to think about the difference between the two and to assess the two. However,

the fact of the matter is that all the weakness and evils that are found in our *ummah* today are as a result of overlooking the difference that exists between the two.

People think that *jâhilîyyah* only refers to the Arab *jâhilîyyah*. And that Arab *jâhilîyyah* refers to the era of idol-worship, the era of female infanticide, the era of alcoholism, the era of highway robbery. This is the only thing that they think about. However, the society, social life, their way of living, their criteria in passing judgement, their likes and their dislikes – all these things do not come to their minds. When in actual fact, *jâhilîyyah* entails all these things. If the word *jâhilîyyah* were translated in the Urdu language, then the translation that would encompass all this and include all this will be: that it refers to that era which remained deprived of the light of prophet-hood. That era of a nation which remained deprived of the light and guidance of prophet-hood. This is irrespective of whether it be Europe or the Sassanid kingdom, whether it be India or Arabia.

I translate this word in another way as well: "a self-invented lifestyle". What is *jâhilîyyah*? To live a lifestyle that is invented by yourself. This is the essence and spirit of *jâhilîyyah*. This is what makes it opposed to and different from Islam. This is what makes it different from the divinely revealed religions, from the divine Books and from the divine teachings. So if anything is deprived of the light of prophet-hood and divine guidance, it is *jâhilîyyah*. What happens in such a case? How is life spent in such a case? It is a self-invented life. In other words, we will follow whatever comes to our heart. We will follow whatever our society and our environment desires. We will follow the criteria and principles that have been laid down by our society. This is the meaning of a self-invented lifestyle. In the definition of the Qur'ân and the Ḥadîth, this is known as *jâhilîyyah*.

Those who sing the slogans of jâhilîyyah

If you were to peruse through the Ḥadîth literature, you will learn from several places that Rasûlullâh ﷺ also termed things that were not connected to one's belief as *jâhilîyyah*. There was a Saḥâbî (whose name I do not wish to take). His relationship with his worker was not equitable. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said to him:

إنك امرؤ فيك جاهلية

"You are a person in whom there is a whiff of *jâhiliyyah*"

Now there is no need to search for beliefs. To treat a servant in a manner that distinguishes between the master and the slave is termed as *jâhilîyyah*. Even more severe than this, Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

من تعزى عليكم بعزاء الجاهلية

Whoever invokes the call of *jâhilîyyah* to you, whoever invites towards the fanaticism of *jâhilîyyah*, whoever sings the slogans of *jâhilîyyah* – speak harshly to him, speak in the most severe terms with him. ولا تكنوا – and do not even resort to allusions and hints [but speak clearly and openly]. Why is this referred to as *jâhilîyyah*?

Rasûlullâh ﷺ said:

من تعزى عليكم بعزاء الجاهلية

If you were to ask the meaning of this from an *'âlim*, his hairs will stand on end. If anyone sings the slogan of *jâhilîyyah* before you, if he beautifies any act or custom of *jâhilîyyah*, you should use harsh words against him. Give no concession in this regard. Do not even resort to any allusions and hints. Who is saying this? Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the mercy to the worlds is saying this. The one who is an embodiment of mercy and kindness is saying this. You cannot find an example like this. From this you can gauge how Allâh ﷻ and how His Messenger ﷺ look at

jâhilîyyah, how they look at *jâhilîyyah* life, how they look at *jâhilîyyah* criteria, how they look at *jâhilîyyah* calls.

It is something to think about that the era in which Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the most beloved and greatest of Allâh's Prophets, was commissioned as a Prophet, had thousands of faults and evils – idol-worship, oppression, highway robbery, female infanticide, etc. In this way, numerous other evils were found in them. Muslims should learn a lesson from this that this era is named *jâhilîyyah*. In order to show the abhorrence of this era, in order to expose the evil of this era, in order to make us fear an era of this nature, Allâh ﷻ used a word of an eloquent language like Arabic and named it *jâhilîyyah*. Allâh ﷻ could have referred to it as the era of idol-worship, the era of carnage and massacre, the era of oppression and tyranny, the era of mutual warfare. However, the Qur'ân refers to this era as the era of *jâhilîyyah*. Allâh ﷻ says:

(١) لاَ تَبَرُّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الأُوْلَى

(٢) إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

(٣) أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ

(1) "Do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of ignorance." (Sûrah al-Aḥzâb, verse 33)

(2) "When the unbelievers harboured a stubborn disdain in their hearts – the stubborn disdain of ignorance." (Sûrah al-Fatḥ, verse 26)

(3) "Do they desire the decision of ignorance?"

The proof of Islam's authenticity is its abhorrence of jâhilîyyah

Allâh ﷻ uses the word *jâhilîyyah* over here. We recite the Qur'ân. We pass through all this but do not think about it. The choice of words is a very important aspect. Authors, literateurs, research scholars and people of insight know that when a word

is chosen for a particular thing, then if the person is fully conversant with the facts, if he can detect the pulse, if he has full control over the language, then he will choose a word that will portray what he wants to the full. If he wants to paint a picture of disdain, he will choose a word that causes this. If he wants to praise something, he will choose a word that portrays the greatness and respect of that thing.

Allâh ﷻ is the creator of languages. He is the creator of words. He is the creator of meanings and facts. He is the creator of literateurs, poets and people of excellence. He could have expressed this evil with some other word. Yet, He is giving us this lesson that we should fear *jâhilîyyah* forever. That the era that is not worthy of existing – we do not know when Allâh's punishment will befall it. Allâh ﷻ has been extremely kind to us. He has been extremely merciful that during that era of the Arabs, He sent His most beloved and greatest Messenger. But when that era is mentioned, when the Qur'ân describes that era, the word *jâhilîyyah* is used.

Allâh ﷻ says in all His might:

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ

These people do not accept the law of Islam. They do not accept the decision of the Sharî'ah. So what! Do they desire the decision of *jâhilîyyah*?!

In order to display this anger, an extremely harsh and stern word ought to have been used. However, in the sight of Allâh ﷻ and in the language of the Qur'ân, *jahâlah* (ignorance) is such a major crime that it is referred to as *jâhilîyyah*.

This is a proof of the authenticity of Islam that there must be such an abhorrence towards *kufr* (*jâhilîyyah*), towards its entire environment, towards all those things that are related to it, towards all its peculiarities and towards all its salient features. A person should experience difficulty at even imagining a

return to it or being tried and tested by it. The strength of his îmân lies in preferring death over the most minute form of the era of *jâhilîyyah*.

أفحكم الجاهلية يبغون – do they desire the ways and customs of *jâhilîyyah*? Do they give preference to and choose *jâhilîyyah*? Do they desire the decision of *jâhilîyyah*? I had said previously that the word حكم does not only mean "decision". That it also means "giving preference" and "choosing". In other words, a person chooses something which has an overriding factor, which has a proof. What! Will they choose the decision of *jâhilîyyah*? Will they choose something which *jâhilîyyah* has given preference to and which *jâhilîyyah* has chosen? This is not permissible.

A Qur'ânic warning to the Muslim *ummah*

لاَ تَرْكَنُوْا إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ، وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لاَ تُنْصَرُوْنَ

"[O Muslims!] Do not incline towards the wrongdoers or else the fire will afflict you. [At that time] you will have no friends whatsoever apart from Allâh. You will then not be helped." (Sûrah Hûd, verse 113)

Your hearts should not become inclined

Many of us know Arabic. But knowing the language, and more than that, being conscious and mindful of knowing it causes a barrier in getting a true understanding of it. It is because of the impact of this verse that I have to say that our Arabic can cause a barrier in understanding. We know the meaning of each word of this verse. However, it is not easy to understand the spirit, the miraculous nature and the power of the words.

This verse states that your hearts should not become inclined. There should not be any internal inclination towards those people who have adopted oppression and wrongdoing as their hallmark, whose lives have deviated from the straight path, and who have chosen to be far from Allâh ﷻ. فتمسكم النار – if not, the flames of the fire will also reach you. The fire will also touch you. وما لكم من دون الله من أولياء ثم لا تنصرون – you will then be deprived of the friendship of Allâh ﷻ and no one will be able to help you.

We think that in the Sharî'ah, in the injunctions of the Sharî'ah and in the language of Islam, there are just two things. For example, this is *kufr* and this is Islam, this is *halâl* and this is *harâm*, this is lawful and this is prohibited. However, we do not understand that apart from this, there are certain things that, at times, are difficult to be labeled as *harâm* or *kufr*. Yet, these things can be divided into two compartments – one that Allâh

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We think that in the Sharî'ah, in the injunctions of the Sharî'ah and in the language of Islam, there are just two things. For example, this is *kufr* and this is Islam, this is *halâl* and this is *harâm*, this is lawful and this is prohibited. However, we do not understand that apart from this, there are certain things that, at times, are difficult to be labeled as *harâm* or *kufr*. Yet, these things can be divided into two compartments – one that Allâh

ﷻ approves and one that He does not approve. These principles are learnt after studying the Qur'ân, having knowledge of the Qur'ân and the Sunnah, knowing the temperament of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and understanding the way of thinking of the Sahâbah ﷺ. That apart from îmân and *kufr*, apart from *halâl* and *harâm*, apart from the lawful and the prohibited, there are other things. What are they? They entail the manner of living and social life, and the different types and categories of appearance, salient features, identity, and the means of beautification and beauty.

At the time when Rasûlullâh ﷺ was commissioned as a Prophet and Islam came, the demand was not mere acceptance of the call towards îmân. That one should believe in it and attest to it. That one should repent from polytheism and abstain from *kufr*. Rather, an entire culture was also given. They also received an entire way of life. The Muslims were told to adopt a particular type of dress. They were told that if they did so, the eyes of Allâh's ﷻ mercy will fall on them. They were told to abstain from certain things for they were the salient features of punished nations and those nations that had earned the anger of Allâh ﷻ. They are the ones whom Allâh ﷻ had destroyed. They are the ones on whom Allâh's torment fell. Allâh ﷻ taught the Muslims that they should also consider these nations worthy of aversion.

I am explaining a point of a very great religion. Many people do not look at it in this light. People think that these are not compulsory and obligatory duties (*farḍ* and *wâjib*). These things do not entail *kufr* and *fisq* (open disobedience). If you were to ask a mufti and if he were to give a *fatwâ* and the order of the Sharî'ah, he too will say that this neither entails *kufr* nor polytheism. However, this is a salient feature and distinctive quality of punished nations, of nations that rejected the bounties of Allâh ﷻ, that did not value the bounties of Allâh ﷻ, that considered themselves to be self-sufficient, that followed their

whims and desires, that were materialists, that worshipped wealth, that worshipped power, that followed their whims and desires. This can be seen in their dress and appearance as well. Those who are deprived of the wealth of îmân, who remained deprived of this even during the time of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, who continued doing so, whose progenies also remained deprived – they all chose that old path of unbelief. All this is included in their dress and appearance.

A Muslim desires to develop an Islamic temperament. He is not confining himself to outward forms of worship but wants to make himself eligible for the mercy of Allâh ﷻ and the supplications of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He knows that he will have to show his face before Allâh ﷻ. Or, he knows that the angels will come before him in his grave. That they will question him. Or he imagines certain scene of the day of resurrection. If all this is not present, he at least knows that Allâh ﷻ has a record of all his feelings, all his emotions, all his likes and dislikes. There is no difference between this and visually seeing with the eyes. As far as proof and certainty are concerned, the conviction that we have from the Qur'ân, the Sunnah, the Aḥâdîth, from the treasure of the Prophet's ﷺ life – there is no difference between this conviction and visually witnessing something. And this is how it ought to be. It is a sign of weak îmân if we consider a difference. It is therefore required of such a Muslim to abhor the culture, the dress and the appearance of non-Muslims, of followers of other religions, of those who dislike Islam, of those who wage war against Islam, of those who look down upon Islamic culture and Islamic society.

I do not consider this to be a mere partial matter, something that is merely imitated and something that is merely a form of excellence and perfection – whereby if Allâh ﷻ inspires someone, he may do it as well. No. According to me, ṣalâh, zakâh, fasting and ḥajj are all in their place. Our beliefs are in their place. But together with this, Muslims should abhor the

dress and appearance of non-Muslims, they should abhor the culture and civilization of non-Muslims, they should abhor the ideals and values of non-Muslims, they should remain far from all this, they should endeavour to save themselves from all this.

This is the meaning of this verse:

لَا تَرْكَنُوْا إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ

If there is any inclination towards them, for example, if you start looking at them with respect and affection, if you look at an Englishman, an American, a European (when he is an embodiment of his culture), if you look up to him and think to yourself that this person is indeed a very progressive person, that he alone is a very cultured person, that this is indeed his society, look at him: he wakes up late in the morning, he shaves his beard, he has a bath, he wears new clothes, he then has breakfast, he goes to his office, he goes to the university – this is what you call system, this is what you call orderliness, this is what you call discipline, this is how life should be spent. Remember, that if these thoughts came into your mind, then if there is any watchful eye at that time, if there is someone who could see within you, he would say that some deficiency has come into your îmân.

This is what is demanded of us. Listen carefully. This is especially demanded of those studying the knowledge of prophet-hood – of Rasûlullâh ﷺ - that it is not required of them to be regular in their salâh alone and to abstain from the forbidden alone. Rather, they should also be proud of their Islam, of their culture, of their civilization as shown by the Messenger of Allâh ﷻ and the Sahâbah ﷺ.

Be grateful for the bounty of Islam and abstain from emulating the people of Mûsâ ﷺ

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيْدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِيْ لَشَدِيْدٌ

"When your Sustainer proclaimed: 'If you are grateful, I will give you more. And if you are ungrateful, My punishment is certainly severe." (Sûrah Ibrâhîm, verse 7)

Gratitude is greatly valued in the sight of Allâh ﷻ and holds a very great position. Allâh ﷻ bestows unlimited treasures for showing gratitude. Allâh ﷻ is not in need of anyone or anything. From among His names and attributes, there is also the attribute of شكور – that there is an increase in His bounties when gratitude is shown to Him. There is also the danger of bounties being snatched away when ingratitude is shown to Him.

This is what Allâh ﷻ is saying in this verse. That if you show thanks, He will give you more. But if you are ungrateful, then His punishment is also very severe.

When a person sees something that others have, in which there is much splendour, much pomp, in which there are many means of attraction; then on such occasions, Satan attacks this person. He creates greed and covetousness in the minds of the Muslims – that we should also have something like this. There are so many nations in this world that are deprived of the wealth of Islam and belief in the oneness of Allâh ﷻ. Some of them have religious processions, some of them place coverings on idols, they cook special food, they have assemblies, they have goods of amusement. Some nations slipped at this point and became a target of Satan's attacks. They began saying (either verbally or by their actions), "If only we also had such things."

Numerous nations of this world left Allâh ﷻ aside and made idols for themselves. Some of them made nationalism their

idol. Some of them made their government their idol. Some of them made their language their idol. Some of them made the stories and tales of their forefathers and their history their idols. Some of them made race and colour their idols. However, Allâh ﷻ safeguarded the Muslims from all these idols. We have been taught that we should always be proud about our Islam. We should not look at anything but Islam with eyes of greed and covetousness.

The admonitory lesson from the story of Mûsâ's ﷺ people

Allâh ﷻ relates an admonitory lesson of the people of Mûsâ ﷺ, viz. the Banî Isrâ'îl. There is a great lesson in this for us Muslims.

Through Mûsâ ﷺ, Allâh ﷻ bestowed the Banî Isrâ'îl with His true recognition. He blessed them with the wealth of *tauḥîd*, after which there is no greater wealth. He created îmân within them so that they may understand that there is none worthy of worship and servitude besides Allâh ﷻ. And that none has power apart from Him. However, they were extremely ungrateful and immature. On one occasion they were travelling with Mûsâ ﷺ. فـأتوا عـلى قـوم يعكفون على أصنام لهم – they passed by a people who were submitting before some idols of theirs. They saw a people holding a procession. There was a market place with shops fully embellished. People of all classes were present there. There were some idols and statues that were made by them. The people were worshipping on one side and amusing themselves at the same time. It was a festival. A place of splendour. On seeing this splendour and attraction, the Banî Isrâ'îl began salivating. They spontaneously said:

اجْعَلْ لَّنَا إِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ

"O Mûsâ! This is such an attractive thing. Make for us a deity just as they have deities. Similar to what they have. Something

which we could see with our eyes. We could fall at their feet. Our hearts could attain some amusement from them and we could experience some physical enjoyment. Make for us a deity just as these polytheists have so many deities."

The anger of the greatest monotheist of his time, Mûsâ ﷺ, reached its heights and he said:

إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ

"You are the most unworthy people. You are the most ungrateful people. You are the most ignorant people. I have been teaching you for so many days and removed you from this filth. Allâh ﷻ sent down manna and *salwâ* for you. Yet you are saying that you want a procession and a festival like this!!? There are rocks on your intelligence. Can you not see?

إِنَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

"The activity in which these people are involved is to be destroyed. And all that they are doing is baseless." Do you know what is going to happen? All this is going to be completely reduced to smithereens. This is an amusement for a short while. I have brought you to the door of Allâh ﷻ, to His threshold. I nurtured and trained you. While your condition is this that no sooner you witnessed a scene, no sooner you saw something of splendour, you forgot everything. The lessons of all these days which you studied have now been forgotten in a single moment. How could the self-honour of a Prophet ever bear to witness this?

Mûsâ ﷺ became extremely angry and he ought to have become angry because he was also a Prophet. He therefore said:

إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ. إِنَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

All these things that you are seeing are all going to be swept away. The word مُتَبَّرٌ that is in this verse cannot be replaced by

any other word. The force, severity and anger that is gauged from it is not found in the words إن هؤلاء هالك , إن هؤلاء فاسد , إن هؤلاء - إِنَّ هٰؤُلَاءِ مُتَبَّرٌ . فـــانِ – these people are going to be completely swept away. I have used the words "swept away" intentionally. These words are heavy in nature. In addition to that, they even sound heavy (At times, words that sound heavy are also needed in order to display power and anger. In other words, mere construction of letters is not sufficient. Sound is also needed.) If any other light word were used in place of the word متبر , it would not have had this effect. It would not have portrayed this anger.

After this, Mûsâ ﷺ tried to make them understand and said to them:

أَغَيْرَ اللهِ أَبْغِيْكُمْ إِلٰهًا وَّهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِيْنَ

O servants of Allâh! May Allâh ﷻ have mercy on your condition. May Allâh ﷻ give you intelligence and understanding. أَغَيْرَ اللهِ أَبْغِيْكُمْ إِلٰهًا – should I leave Allâh ﷻ aside and search for some other deity for you? وَّهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِيْنَ – when in actual fact He favoured you over the entire world (on the basis of this belief in His oneness)? Yet you are saying that you want to leave aside the Allâh who did this favour to you, who showed His kindness to you, who liberated you from the slavery of Pharaoh, and that I should bring before you an incapable and powerless deity?!!

This is a great admonition. Allâh ﷻ presented this example to us so that we may learn a lesson from it. That we create such an Islamic society wherein there is a natural and innate abhorrence and detestation for sins. That we should recoil from every call which entails subjugation of divine teachings, Islamic injunctions, and practising on the Sharî'ah. That if we are called towards an unrestricted and unrestrained life, we do not

permit it to exist, that we confront it with not only abhorrence, but with anger and antagonism.

We Muslims therefore have to be proud about our Islam. We have to consider Islam to be our greatest wealth. We must consider our allegiance to Islam, the call of Islam and everything connected to Islam to be the greatest wealth.

Learning a lesson from the people of Saba'

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِيْ بَارَكْنَا فِيْهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَّقَدَّرْنَا فِيْهَا السَّيْرَ سِيْرُوْا فِيْهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِيْنَ. فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوْا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيْثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ. إِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ.

"We had placed between them and those villages which We had blessed, such villages that were visible on the roads. And We fixed [easy] stages therein for the up and down journey. Travel therein by night and day in safety. But then they said: 'O our Sustainer! Make the stages between our journeys longer.' They wronged themselves. And so, We made them tales and completely tore them into pieces. In this are signs for every patient, grateful person." (Sûrah Saba', verses 18-19)

In the Qur'ân, Allâh ﷻ relates the stories of past nations, previous cultures and destroyed societies as a way of admonition and advice. So that we may take lesson from them. For this purpose, Allâh ﷻ sets forth some examples and cases for they contain lessons of admonition therein.

The above-mentioned Qur'ânic verses contain a geographical and historical account. They contain an admonitory lesson for the entire human society, for every Islamic and non-Islamic country. These verses relate a living, eternal and universal reality to us. They present a human, psychological reality before us that demands pondering over and deep study. It is a natural weakness of man that he becomes tired of the same type of comfort, luxury, peace, etc. irrespective of how comforting it may be. He always wants change irrespective of whether that change would put him through difficult trials and tribulations. The Qur'ân conveys this with the eloquent word بَطَرَ :

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا

"How many a town We destroyed that exulted in its means of livelihood!" (Sûrah al-Qasas, verse 58)

The story of the people of Saba' was related before us. It is such a rich story that it highlights a very subtle and deep aspect from among the aspects of human nature. This is an aspect which we should not overlook. Instead, we have to learn a lesson from it. This is because Allâh ﷻ related the stories and incidents of past nations in order to serve as a lesson and as an admonition. Allâh ﷻ says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

"There is certainly a lesson in their stories for those who possess intelligence." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verse 111)

فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ

"Recount to them, then, these incidents so that they may reflect." (Sûrah al-A'râf, verse 176)

The Qur'ân is not a history book of human culture and society. It relates the stories, civilization, society and culture of previous nations to serve as an admonition. Some similarities may be found in them. This ought to be pondered over by psychologists and those fully conversant with human history. It is also worthy of attention by research scholars that divine wisdom is presenting an entire chapter on life. This story is absolutely clear and lucid. It presents to us a living picture of the people of Saba'. It becomes clear to us how engrossed this nation had become in its prosperity, its affluence and its indifference. This is something which man always desires. This is the purpose behind which conquerors attack other lands. This is what the founders of kingdoms and empires always hanker after.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِيْ مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَّمِيْنٍ وَّشِمَالٍ كُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لَهُ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَّرَبٌّ غَفُوْرٌ فَأَعْرَضُوْا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَيْ أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَّشَيْءٍ مِّنْ سِدْرٍ قَلِيْلٍ.

"For the people of Saba' there was certainly a sign in their dwelling-place: two gardens to the right and to the left. Eat from the provision of your Sustainer and give thanks to Him. The land is pleasant, and the Sustainer is forgiving.But they turned away. So We let loose upon them a fierce flood and We gave them, in exchange for their two gardens, two other gardens which had some bitter fruit, tamarisks, and a few lote-trees." (Sûrah Saba', verses 15-16)

The Qur'ân places its hand on the sick pulse of man and identifies the place of the sickness. Why did he have to experience this calamity? Why did Allâh ﷻ snatch away this prosperity and affluence? Why were these treasures of luxury and comfort which even kings hankered after taken away from them? Just as a teacher places the finger of his student on the letters of the alphabet and teaches them to him, the Qur'ân is placing the hand of the reader and saying:

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِيْ بَارَكْنَا فِيْهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَّقَدَّرْنَا فِيْهَا السَّيْرَ سِيْرُوْا فِيْهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِيْنَ.

"We had placed between them and those villages which We had blessed, such villages that were visible on the roads. And We fixed [easy] stages therein for the up and down journey. Travel therein by night and day in safety." (Sûrah Saba', verse 18)

The commentators write that the dwellings of the Saba' were in a very pleasant climate. The air over there was very gentle. No plague or illness passed onto this place. If a foreigner came to this place and had any bugs on his clothing, they would immediately die upon reaching there. In like manner, no harmful animal could live there. Allâh ﷻ created villages between them and Syria. These could be clearly seen. They were attached to each other. Stages were set for the up and down journey. The travellers did not have to bother about food and provisions for the way. Nor was there any crowding and rush to find a place to stay over for the night. There was neither any fear and danger from enemies. Fruit and water were found in abundance wherever they stopped. If they stopped for a

siesta in a particular village, they could sleep the night in the next village (because the stages were set accordingly).

This is the story of the people of Saba' to whom Allâh ﷻ had bestowed everything. He made their journeys very easy and comforting. The distances between the villages were short. However, they were ungrateful for these bounties. This is a natural weakness of man. They ought to have showed gratitude for these numerous bounties. Their tongues ought to have remained moist in praising and glorifying Allâh ﷻ. They ought to have become embodiments of gratitude and submission. Instead, they asked for the direct opposite of all this. The Qur'ân says:

فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا

"But then they said: 'O our Sustainer! Make the stages between our journeys longer.'" (Sûrah Saba', verse 19)

Can this be termed a journey that we travel while we are eating and drinking, enjoying ourselves, talking away and yet going from one place to another? We do not want this. We want a journey that would tire us. We desire a dangerous desert, wherein the stages are long. We desire a rugged journey. We want to face dangers.

What was the result of this? The result was that Allâh ﷻ snatched all these bounties away from them. He scattered and dispersed them in the lands and reduced them to tales of history.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيْثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ

"And so, We made them tales and completely tore them into pieces." (Sûrah Saba', verse 19)

At times, a person may consider this story to be insignificant. He may doubt that how could human nature become so distorted. How could the nature and temperament of a cultured, civilized and prosperous nation like the people of 'Saba'

become so spoilt? How could they go so off course? We cannot understand this. However, the Qur'ân relates this story to us. The Qur'ân is that book of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ on which not even a whiff of vanity can fall. Whatever it contains is divine revelation and based on facts and reality.

The Qur'ân relates the story of the people of Saba'. Allâh ﷻ is all-knowing and all-wise. He knows that there are nations like this at present. That they are adopting the same ways and treading the same path. They desire poverty, they hope for dangers and difficulties, they hanker after hardship and ruggedness. What is the reason for this? This is because they have become tired and bored of these bounties. Based on deviated propaganda, and political, social and external factors, they want to go towards a life of poverty and hardship. It is for this reason that the Qur'ân recorded this story. History has no record of this story. In comparison to history, the path of the Qur'ân is something far greater and more different. History records those stories that are related to masters and palaces, that are related to ministers of the kingdom and the courts of the government, that are related to wars. Stories containing the successes and failures of humanity, stories in which there is an admonition, in which there is a lesson and an advice – all this is beyond the subject of history.

The Qur'ân is opposite to this. The rise and fall of nations, the change of governments, the proliferation of conquests – all these are not the subjects of the Qur'ân. The Qur'ân deals with human ailments, i.e. it discusses weaknesses in human nature – from which a lesson could be learnt. In which there is a lesson and an admonition for man in every place, every era and every time.

The extent of life after death

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا ۚ قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ ۖ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ بَل لَّبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

"Or, have you not seen the person who passed by a city while it lay fallen on its roofs? He said: "How will Allah give life to it after its death?" So Allah kept him dead for a hundred years. Then He raised him up. He (Allah) said: "How long have you remained here?" He said: "I have remained for a day or a little less than a day." He said: "No! In fact you remained for a hundred years. Now look at your food and drink - it has not decomposed. And look at your donkey. And We desired to make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones - how We set them up together and then clothe them with flesh." When this condition became clear to him, he said: "I know that surely Allah has power over everything." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 259)

In the light of my limited and deficient study of the Qur'ân and my limited recitation of the Qur'ân which every Muslim has the inspiration to make, it is my belief that this verse has a far deeper meaning, and wider connotations and possibilities than those which the noble commentators offered in their respective times. And far more than what the scholars understood in the light of their circumstances and researchès.

I am a student of the Qur'ân and I always try to understand its meanings and references. The above-mentioned verse relates a specific incident. Allâh ﷻ displays His power in it: food that is left open goes bad and rots within a few hours. Yet, in this incident, Allâh ﷻ enabled it to remain fresh for 100 years – without getting spoilt. It is my opinion that this verse does not make reference towards a physical and material life alone. Rather, it makes reference to a spiritual life, towards an internal reawakening, towards the return of that historical character

which an *ummah*, a society, a nation or a country achieved, it is also a refreshment of its message and a reference to its rejuvenation which this *ummah* bore. In like manner, the possibility of rejuvenating that firm faith and belief which at some time or the other had been flowing in the veins of this *ummah* like hot blood and which has now become cold. Reference is also made towards those conquests and victories which this *ummah* had once enjoyed.

So this incident also makes a deep reference towards this: that after His religion has become dead for 100 years, and that after His relationship with that nation has become weak during this lengthy period, He occasionally gives it a new life and freshness. Since He can keep an ordinary thing like food fresh for 100 years, without it getting spoilt, He can return His religion in its correct and fresh form after it has degenerated.

It is my understanding that this verse encompasses all these aspects. We therefore cannot say that a seal has been set on the destiny of this country and that an eternal decision has been passed against it. That it will continue living an un-Islamic life and that it will remain in the pits of ignorance forever. (Reference is made to Istanbul and Turkey because this is where this lecture was delivered).

Allâh ﷻ then says:

فَانْظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ

"Now look at your food and drink – it has not decomposed."

When food and drink cannot become decomposed after such a lengthy period of time, how can those heavenly, divine, eternal and universal messages become spoilt around which human life revolves, to which humanity is confined, and on which man's respect and honour is based? Allâh ﷻ thus says:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَؤُفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"Allâh is not such as to waste your Imân. Allâh is certainly very kind and most merciful to people." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 143)

This verse instills hope and optimism in our hearts. It puts confidence in ourselves once again. It rejuvenates our cold emotions and our unsuccessful hopes and wishes. It removes our opiniond and ill omens. This is because when, through the power of Allâh ﷻ, food and drink cannot become decomposed, and these buildings and royal palaces can remain standing despite the passage of days and nights, why can this not remain with this nation of Islam? This Islam which is far more stronger and influential than these buildings, palaces and manifestations of civilization. This Islam which is beneficial, worthy and correct for humanity, and which is necessary and indispensable for human life.

According to me, this verse of the Qur'ân is conveying this glad tiding to us that the nation and country (which resisted the West for centuries and which kept the flag of Islam high) will once again come to life.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ

"You enter the night into the day, and You enter the day into the night. You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from the living." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 27)

The need for îmân throughout one's life and concern for future generations in this regard

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوْبَ الْمَوْتُ ۙ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيْهِ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِيْ ؕ قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ اٰبَآئِكَ إِبْرٰهٖمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ إِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ.

"Were you present when death approached Ya'qûb? When he said to his sons: 'Whom will you worship after me?' They said: 'We will worship your Sustainer and the Sustainer of your forefathers, Ibrâhîm, Ismâ'îl and Ishâq - He alone is worshipped and to Him alone we are obedient.'" (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verse 133)

This verse of the Qur'ân is from the first part of the Qur'ân. The translation of it is generally found in the translations of the Qur'ân. By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, people read these verses through these translations. As for those who know Arabic, they recite these verses directly and understand them. However, many few may have got the opportunity to reflect over this verse. Allâh ﷻ relates it with great importance. Were it not for the fear of this word being against His grand status and a sign of disrespect, I would say that why did Allâh ﷻ pay such attention in relating this incident? The status of Allâh ﷻ is such that anything that is attributed to Him or has some connection with Him, then that thing is certain, it has meaning, it is appropriate to the circumstances, it is appropriate to the time, and it is according to the demands of nature. Proximity to Allâh ﷻ can be achieved through this. One can be saved from many dangers through this.

It seems that if we do not ponder over this incident, we will say that an incident from the life of a Messenger at the time of his death is being related to us. What is the importance of this story from the legal, intellectual, historical and cultural aspects? But when Allâh ﷻ decides to choose something, He includes it in His Book which is to remain till the resurrection, which will be recited by not only all those who have îmân but also by others,

which will be recited again and again. When He chooses such a thing and mentions it in His Book, He does so because He knows that it has something that is worth pondering over and thinking about. In which there are numerous lessons, admonitions and words of wisdom.

Whoever is in the world will have to leave the world one day. Everyone will have to leave irrespective of how long his life has been predetermined. He will have to bid farewell to this world. This applies to the Messengers as well. Allâh ﷻ says:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلاَّ رَسُوْلٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ

Allâh ﷻ takes the name of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and what does He say? That who is Muhammad? He is the Messenger of Allâh ﷻ. The Messengers that were before him also left this world. What this means is that Rasûlullâh ﷺ will also have to bid farewell to the world. He will also have to leave it. He will have to go to that place of proximity which Allâh ﷻ predetermined and reserved for him. Why has an incident from the life of a Messenger when he is bidding farewell to the world been given this eternity and comprehensiveness. Why has it been made worthy of attention? This is something to think about. However, many things that seem to be simple and are not connected to any creed are overlooked. This is the situation with most of us – that we may have not pondered over this incident – as to why it is related to us?

The Muslims and those who are reciting the Qur'ân are addressed:

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوْبَ الْمَوْتُ

"Were you present when death approached Ya'qûb?"

This is a special style and technique of the Qur'ân. When it wants to bring something before you, before your eyes, so that it is as though it is witnessed, it addresses man thus and asks

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This is a special style and technique of the Qur'ân. When it wants to bring something before you, before your eyes, so that it is as though it is witnessed, it addresses man thus and asks

him whether he was there. Were you present when Ya'qûb ﷺ approached death? When he was breathing his last?

إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي

"When he said to his sons: 'Whom will you worship after me?'"

Now just think that this concerns Ya'qûb ﷺ. And who is Ya'qûb ﷺ? He is Ya'qûb, the son of Isḥâq, the son of Ibrâhîm. He is the son of a Prophet and the nephew of a Prophet. The son of Isḥâq ﷺ and the nephew of Ismâ'îl ﷺ. His father is a Prophet, his uncle is a Prophet and his grandfather is a Prophet. Who is his grandfather? Ibrâhîm ﷺ - whom Allâh ﷻ referred to as His friend. So he is the grandson of Ibrâhîm ﷺ - the friend of Allâh ﷻ. He is the nephew of Ismâ'îl ﷺ who is the forefather of the leader of all Prophets and Messengers, Muḥammad ﷺ. He himself is a Prophet, he is a father of a Prophet and he is a child of a Prophet. Yûsuf ﷺ who is a Prophet is his son. Look at the environment of this house.

Think about this: it cannot be imagined of an *'âlim*, a great saint of his time, a reformer, a lecturer, or an educated Muslim to ask such a question at the time of his death. The name of Allâh has been taught to his children. They recite the *kalimah*. They call themselves Muslims. They all have Muslim names. Those of them who have reached the age of puberty or close to it have been divinely inspired by Allâh ﷻ. A religious environment pervades the entire home. They go to the mosques in order to offer their ṣalâh. If they do not do this, they at least see their parents doing so. They hear the name of Allâh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ being mentioned in their home. What, then, was the need to ask them this question? There are many things that could be asked. Everyone knows that if all the wills of the world were to be gathered, a huge library will be filled. A huge reflection of human history, literature and human needs and necessities will come before us. If someone has the time, he can do this: he could gather the wills of all the respectable people

that are quoted in different books. If the wills of the *'ulamâ'*, saints, reformers, people of the government, etc. were gathered in one place, such a picture of human perception, human intelligence, relationship with one's children and inheritors will come before us, that strange facts about human psychology will come to the fore. We will learn the extent of human concurrence. These wills have not been written by many people, not by thousands of people, but by hundreds of thousands of people. This is what we will see in these wills: that the father gathered his children. The thing that we heard the most and seen the most in books is that the departing father, the patient father who is about to bid farewell to this world, gathered his children. What we have generally read about all noble people, all noble families, many of whom are educated and cultured, is that the father will say to them: "My children, you should not quarrel with each other. You should live with unity and honour." Alternatively, we will read: "My children, I have hidden a certain amount of money for you at a certain place. I hadn't informed you about it till now. You must dig up that certain place and you will find a treasure there." Alternatively, we will read: "This is the amount that I am owed. Write it down. Such and such people owe me these amounts. Collect these amounts from them. This is the note of debt which they wrote. You must show it to them." If the person was very cautious and pious, he would have said: "Listen, my children! O the stars of my eyes and my beloved ones! These are the people to whom I owe money, I have a debt. Do not forget this. Those who have much fear of Allâh ﷻ and are conscious of Him will say this.

What type of will is this? Think about it for a moment. Try and picture the scene at that time. Who is addressed over here? These are the offspring of a Prophet, not the offspring of a friend of Allâh ﷻ. The offspring of a friend of Allâh ﷻ are looked up with great regard. The offsping of a saint are looked

up with great regard. The offspring of an *'âlim* are looked up with great regard. We have to believe this, and if we do not, then our îmân is deficient – that these are the offspring of a Prophet and that there is no one better than them at that time. There can be no person and no group that is more worthy of respect, honour and love than them. They are the sons, nephews and grandsons of Prophets.

What did they see in their homes? They saw that salâh was performed. That the name of Allâh ﷻ is taken. That He is remembered. That He is beseeched in their supplications. They saw their mothers crying before Allâh ﷻ for themselves and for their children. No name but the name of Allâh ﷻ was taken in their home. They did not even hear about there being anyone else in this universe, who has some control over this universe, who is able to benefit or harm in any way, of whom something is asked, in whom some hope is placed. They heard no belief apart from *tauhîd*. They heard of no worship besides salâh and fasting. They heard no call except that of fear and love for Allâh ﷻ.

When a person has conviction, when he attaches importance to a particular thing, he does not bother about intellectual polemics, assumptions and rationalizing. This is the real difference. If a person is ill, if he is really ill, then all the precautions are removed. Irrespective of his level of self-respect and self-honour, irrespective of how self-controlled he is, irrespective of how patient and forbearing he is, he will say to his children, his relatives that he is certainly suffering. That they should call for a doctor. In like manner, if a person is really hungry, he will not feel shy to ask for food. He will not feel shy to ask for the food to be brought. Even the sons of the rich, the leaders, the government officials, etc. who are considered to be above all this, will also express their hunger. So the entire matter is with regard to having a perception of

what is important. So tell me now, why did Ya'qûb ﷺ call his children and what did he ask them?

It is his final hour and there is very little time to talk. This is something that is well known by the person who is leaving this world. Why, then, will a Messenger who is divinely inspired by Allâh ﷻ and on whom divine revelation comes not perceive that he is about to bid farewell to this world, that he has just a few minutes left to speak to these children and grandchildren? What could he have spoken about? This is the only thing we can understand. This is what we have seen in books wherein wills are recorded. Those who have seen this all know very well that this is what is written in them: you should live together and united. You should live with love, affinity and good behaviour. You should see to the rights of your mother. You should see to the rights of your relatives. You should maintain cordial relations with them.

This has been carrying on for hundreds and thousands of years. It is from such talks that they experience tranquillity. But what is the fact of the matter over here? The fact of the matter is that the thing to which the heart is attached, the thing which holds some importance to the person, the thing which the person considers to be absolute, the thing which he considers to be a source of eternal happiness or eternal wretchedness – he would give priority to it. It all boils down to attaching importance to a particular thing, and therefore mentioning that thing.

To protect the îmân and religion of one's children, the true recognition of their religion and îmân and then protecting this, to safeguard it, to live according to it, and to give it preference over departing from this world – to give the most importance to all this – I do not think that there is a better story concerning this than the one that I related to you. Ya'qûb ﷺ summoned his children. His grandchildren must have also been there because he passed away at an old age. In those days, people had

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long lives. So the house must have been filled with his children, grandchildren, nephews, etc. The Arabic word بَنِيْهِ includes all of them.

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوْبَ الْمَوْتُ

So, O you who are reciting the Qur'ân! Were you present when Ya'qûb ﷺ was breathing his last? When death was standing before him?

إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيْهِ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِيْ

When he said to his sons: "O my sons! O the part and parcel of my flesh! O the light of my eyes! Tell me, I want to hear one thing from you. I wish to gain peace from one thing and then depart from this world." The Qur'ân does not relate anything else. You will not find anything else in the books of history also. You will not find anything else in the other divine books also. That when he had just a few breaths left in this world, he asked them:

مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِيْ

"Whom will you worship after me? Before whom will you prostrate?"

I am telling you with conviction. It is as though I can see and hear it. Did any person in the world say such a thing and will anyone say such a thing? Yet Ya'qûb ﷺ said it. The Qur'ân relates this incident. There is much wisdom in it. They must have said something in reply. But the self-honour of *tauḥîd* and the respect of prophet-hood did not permit anything else to be mentioned in-between. Allâh ﷻ therefore immediately quotes their reply. In other words, the oneness of Allâh ﷻ did not permit any other speech to come in-between his question and their reply. However, I am saying that it is possible that they could have said: "O father! O grandfather! Is this something to ask about? What did you teach us? What did we see with our

own eyes? What happens in your house? Whose children are we? Whose blood is flowing through our veins? You are asking us this question? This ought to be asked to some unbelieving (*kâfir*) tribe. Who are we? We are your flesh and blood. We are pieces of your body. It cannot be even imagined of us." They must have said that the self-honour of *tauḥîd* did not even permit such an interlude. That immediately after the question, the reply is immediately given:

نَعْبُدُ إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ آبَائِكَ

They replied: O father! O grandfather! Is this something to be asked about? Is this something to cause us to fear? The blood of Ibrâhîm ﷺ, Ismâ'îl ﷺ, Isḥâq ﷺ and Ya'qûb ﷺ is flowing in our veins. You taught us to abhor polytheism. You taught us to abhor unbelief. We are prepared to die, but we will not allow ourselves to be caught in polytheism and unbelief. You may leave this world with peace and tranquility.

نَعْبُدُ إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ آبَائِكَ

We will worship your deity. We will worship the deity [Allâh] of your elders, your forefathers, your uncles.

إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيْمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيْلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا وَّنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُوْنَ

They said: 'We will worship your Sustainer and the Sustainer of your forefathers, Ibrâhîm, Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq - He alone is worshipped and to Him alone we are obedient.'

This is how every Muslim ought to be. He should always fear about his own self. He should always be concerned about his own îmân. He should therefore continually make *du'â'* that his îmân should be safeguarded. That he should die with îmân. He should also be convinced about his children – that during his lifetime and even after he passes away – they will not leave aside Allâh ﷻ, they will not submit before anyone else. This conviction and this guarantee is most important. This is the guarantee a person should obtain. With îmân, abhorrence of

unbelief and all those things associated with it is also necessary.

فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللهِ

Allâh ﷻ mentions this first: that he who rejects the rebellious Satan, who opposes him, and then brings îmân in Allâh ﷻ - such a person has held on to the strong rope of Allâh ﷻ. Therefore, فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوْتِ – he who rejects Satan – is also necessary. In the *kalimah*, Allâh ﷻ first brings the negation:

لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللهُ

First there is the negation and then there is the affirmation. None is worthy of worship, He who is made the most beloved, He who is made the only object, He who is the only being that is wanted, that is worshipped – إلا الله – except Allâh ﷻ. So first comes the negation and then the affirmation. We should also remain steadfast on this negation and affirmation.

This is the cover in which Muslims should be moulded. This is the criterion of testing the value of their îmân. By relating this incident in the Qur'ân, Allâh ﷻ has immortalized it. Not only every Muslim generation, but every human generation should read it and take a lesson from it. Allâh ﷻ did not narrate history to us by mentioning it in the Qur'ân. The Qur'ân is not a book of history. It is history but not for history. We are taught that this is how the minds of the Muslims should work.

He neither found Allâh nor did he enjoy communion with any idol

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ. فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ، وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهِ، خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةَ، ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ.

"Among people is he who worships Allâh on the border-line: if prosperity reaches him, he remains steadfast on that worship [of Allâh]. But if adversity afflicts him, he turns about on his face. He loses both this world and the hereafter. This is the manifest loss." (Sûrah al-Hajj, verse 11)

This is a great example of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân and its ability to draw a picture before us. What is this verse? It is a miracle in itself. It is a picture of an individual, and also of groups, nations and communities. In the Arabic language, the word مِنْ is applicable to both individuals and groups. There are also people who worship Allâh ﷻ by standing on the border-line. By "worship" it is not meant only salâh and other strict acts of worship. Rather, it also refers to obedience to Allâh ﷻ and fulfillment of the injunctions of the Sharî'ah while standing on the very border-line. That border-line which demarcates Islam and *jâhilîyyah*, îmân and *kufr*.

Ponder over the eloquence of the words عَلٰى حَرْفٍ . Even if a camera were to take a picture of this, or even if the greatest artist were to draw this picture, he would not be able to draw such a speaking [and verbal] picture. The full picture of this person's focus and caution is given in this small sentence. He is standing at such a point, that he can move from one front and from one area to another front and another area whenever he likes, without it taking him any time to do so. He cannot even keep his feet firm at that one point or else it would take him long to lift his feet. He places his feet like a flower which would enable him to move from one place to another with the slightest blowing of the wind. You will see that he has moved from one place to another with the slightest change in

unbelief and all those things associated with it is also necessary.

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conditions. His finger is placed on the pulse of time. His far-sighted eyes are watching the government, the society, and the indicators of power and authority. His mind is not distracted from watching the scales of profit and loss for even a single moment.

If time is in accordance with his view and standpoint, if it is in harmony with his place and location, you will not see anyone more ardent in his support for his standpoint nor anyone more engrossed than him in its service. He fulfils his work with absolute tranquility and full confidence. This is the meaning of فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ -.

But if the circumstances were to become unfavourable in the least, if he were to see the opinion of the government, the society and the masses changing in the least, he changes his standpoint immediately. He even saves himself from the accusations of his standpoint. He does not even find any difficulty in changing his appearance, his beliefs, his culture, his language, and even his nationality.

On seeing such a fickle and volatile group, the manner in which this verse is understood, and the manner in which its style and eloquence comes to the fore cannot be expressed by even the greatest books of *tafsîr*. In order to save itself from dangers and suspicion, this fickle group takes special measures and precautions. When there is some material benefit in expressing the salient features of Islam, or if it is a means of acquiring wealth and position, or if it cannot obtain power and authority without it – then you will not find anyone more outspoken than it in expressing and displaying the salient features of Islam. But if it perceives the slightest danger in displaying these features, or if it has to make the least amount of sacrifice for this, then let alone bidding farewell to these salient features, it even abandons the fundamental beliefs of Islam and severs all its relations with it.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَإِذَآ أُوْذِيَ فِي اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ط وَلَئِنْ جَآءَ نَصْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ ط أَوَ لَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ.

"Of people is he who says: "We believe in Allâh." But when he is made to suffer in Allâh's cause, he considers the trial of mankind equal to Allâh's punishment. If any help comes from your Sustainer, they say: "We were certainly with you." Is it not so that Allâh knows fully well all that is in the hearts of the people of the world?" (Sûrah al-'Ankabût, verse 11)

But if this affiliation is a source of his honour and reputation, he would remind us of his old history, his predecessors, his distant past and would try to establish his relationship in some way or another.

وَلَئِنْ جَآءَ نَصْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ

"If any help comes from your Sustainer, they say: 'We were certainly with you.'"

However, Allâh ﷻ knows fully well the true situation and the facts.

أَوَ لَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"Is it not so that Allâh knows fully well all that is in the hearts of the people of the world?"

Generally, the fate of these fickle people is miserable. They do not enjoy any respect with any group. Allâh ﷻ therefore says:

خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةَ، ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ.

"He loses both this world and the hereafter. This is the manifest loss."

It was probably with regard to this that a poet said:

"He neither found Allâh nor did he enjoy communion with any idol. He neither remained on this side nor or that."

When the conditions are conducive and the winds are blowing favourably, when a person receives an award for remaining on a particular standpoint, when he is showered with flowers for this, when the stars of a particular nation or group are high and glittering, when joining a particular party is a source of honour

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and pride – then it is no act of valour and bravery to remain steadfast on that standpoint and to express that belief. But when the conditions are not conducive, when the winds are blowing fiercely against you, when many valiant young men are dying, when adopting a particular creed and belief becomes synonymous to inviting disgrace and humiliation, when it is the time of retrogression of a nation, when progress has turned its face away from it, when time has turned its eyes away from it – then remaining firm and steadfast on that standpoint, attributing yourself to that group is a matter of extreme courage and great loyalty.

To remain steadfast on Islam, to establish your relationship with it, and to openly express its salient features are all matters of honour and pride even today. There is enjoyment in this even today. When the conditions are in its favour, when the power of Islam reigns supreme in the world and they do not have to face failure in any field. However, the enjoyment at displaying loyalty and the spirit of sacrifice during times of trials and tribulations is incomparable. Those who remain steadfast on the truth, those who propagate the truth, those who are prepared to sacrifice their benefits and honours for the sake of their belief begin experiencing the enjoyment of paradise in this very world. Every part of their body begins singing the praises and thanks of Allâh ﷻ.

STORIES AND NARRATIVES

After the Qur'ân, I am also a student of human history, of the history of nations, of Islamic history, of the history of cultures, philosophies, empires, and also of the history of reformatory, educational and revolutionary movements.

I do not have the courage to refer to history as the commentary of the Qur'ân but I can certainly say that history is a confirmation of the Qur'ân. In other words, the norms and ways of Allâh ﷻ that are mentioned in the Qur'ân:

فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللهِ تَبْدِيْلاً وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللهِ تَحْوِيْلاً

"You will never find the way of Allâh changing. You will never find the way of Allâh deviating."
(Sûrah al-Fâṭir, verse 43)

History presents an eye-witness account and evidence of the Qur'ân. It shows how even in the history of nations, communities, cultures and governments, and even in the lives of individuals how the Qur'ânic statement of "the ways of Allâh" were realized and displayed, how they are being realized and how they will continue to be realized in the future.

From the lives of individuals to that of human groups, communities and nations, the Qur'ân shows the consequences of their deviating from divine teachings and human nature, and it provides predictions in this regard. How accurate the Qur'ân was in this regard! And how these predictions were realized!

Maulânâ Abul Ḥasan 'Alî Nadwî *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh*

The story of Yûsuf ﷺ with the inmates of the prison

ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنِّيْ تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ اٰبَاۗءِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ

"This is the knowledge which my Sustainer imparted to me. I have abandoned the religion of the people who do not believe in Allâh and who are rejecters of the hereafter. I have followed the religion of my forefathers; Ibrâhîm, Ishâq, and Ya'qûb." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verses 37-38)

When two prisoners of the prison went to Yûsuf ﷺ for an interpretation of their dreams, he said to them:

ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ

"This is the knowledge which my Sustainer imparted to me."

Look at the beautiful manner in which he commenced his conversation. This is something we have to understand. When you are speaking of something great, the commencement of that conversation also has to be in a great and grand way. Great importance is attached to this in the etiquette of speaking. If this were not the case, the beauty of speech will be lost. This is just like a grand and beautiful building – it is necessary that it also has a grand and beautiful entrance. By merely looking at this, a person must realize the importance of that building. On entering it, he must experience ease and pleasure.

Yûsuf ﷺ commenced his conversation by first of all assuring them that he can interpret their dreams. That the purpose for which they came to him will be fulfilled. They were not wrong in choosing him. They have come to the right place. The person to whom they referred themselves is qualified for the fulfillment of their need. He is the person who will be able to remove them from this mental anguish.

It is a natural thing that a person who is in some need desires that his need be fulfilled as quickly as possible. When a sick

person goes to a doctor, he wants that the doctor should check him, diagnose his illness and prescribe the appropriate medication. If the doctor starts to dilly dally, if he says that he will check his books and then inform him, or that he will consult with other doctors for their opinion, etc. then the heart of this patient will break. He will return despondent. He will probably never go to that doctor again. Therefore, the first part of a conversation has to be such that it creates confidence in the heart of the person who came for that need. He should be convinced that he has come to the right person. That this person will fulfil his need.

قَالَ لَا يَاْتِيْكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقٰنِهٖٓ اِلَّا نَبَّاْتُكُمَا بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمَا

He said: "The food which you receive daily will not reach you but I would have given you the interpretation thereof before it [food] comes to you." (Sûrah Yûsuf, verse 37)

In other words, your requirement will be fulfilled without any delay. What you wish to ask will be answered very quickly. It is obvious that they were both prisoners. They were bound to the rules of the prison. They could not remain sitting with Yûsuf ﷺ for too long. Yûsuf ﷺ therefore told them that even before their food comes to them, he will give an interpretation of their dream and let them leave.

This was the speech of a Prophet. There was a tinge of self-praise and self-aggrandizement in it. Someone could have this thought about him. He therefore said:

ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ

"This is the knowledge which my Sustainer imparted to me."

Try and set your eyes on the circumstances around which this *da'wah* was given to them. If you could find such a wise methodology, you would only find it in the *da'wah* of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Apart from this, in the entire history of invitation towards religion and in the biographies of those who invited

towards religion, I cannot find a circumstance more delicate than this, and a manner of commencing a conversation more subtle than this. Read the verses:

قَالَ لاَ يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلاَّ نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي

He said: "The food which you receive daily will not reach you but I would have given you the interpretation thereof before it [food] comes to you. This is the knowledge which my Sustainer imparted to me."

Look at the word "Sustainer" and see how he introduced the theme of *tauḥîd*. Can a simpler, subtler, more acceptable and quicker way of changing a subject be found? It is as though he is saying to them: I can help you at this point. Allâh ﷻ has given me knowledge thereof. But why did He give me this knowledge?

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللهِ

"This is not a result of my intelligence. It is also not a result of my nobility." When in actual fact both these qualities were found in the most perfect and the most beautiful form in him. Yet he said:

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللهِ وَهُمْ بِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ

"The reason why I have this additional knowledge is that I left a nation that does not believe in Allâh and which rejects the hereafter."

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَاءِيَ إِبْرهِيمَ وَإِسْحقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

"I have followed the religion of my forefathers; Ibrâhîm, Isḥâq, and Ya'qûb."

It is after this that Yûsuf ﷺ commenced his explanation of *tauḥîd*: "My friends, there is a far more serious matter than the thing which you are considering to be a grave matter and the difficulty which has brought you to me. It is the matter of belief. The dream which you saw is just that – a dream. The

more important matter is that when you are awake. It is the matter of your life. It is the matter of your future. It is the matter of the eternal life. Assuming you do not find someone to interpret your dream in this entire world, even then it would not be such a serious matter. But if you do not find someone to interpret to you the purpose of your life and who is the creator of this universe – if you do not acquire a true recognition of this, then this is the actual danger."

He then gave them a dose that was sufficient. He knew that they came for a specific purpose. That they were in a mental anguish. They do not have the patience to listen to a talk of one or two hours. He therefore gave them a dose that was totally appropriate to them and which they could bear – a dose that is perceived by a person who has an expert power of perception and by a wise caller [towards Allâh ﷻ].

Look at this appropriateness and aptness. The beauty of Yûsuf ﷺ becomes clearly apparent in this. There is neither any shortcoming nor any excess in it. The place where the measure and weight is supposed to have stopped, it stopped exactly at that point. In other words, he said the full thing about *tauḥîd*. But he did not lengthen his talk to such an extent that they would begin saying: "If you can give us an interpretation of the dream, then do so. If not, we will go away and come when we get the opportunity again." Yûsuf ﷺ saw that the door to their heart and mind was open. The door to the heart opens at times. It opens by fate sometimes, sometimes because of some motive, and sometimes because of some anguish. The actual and original message therefore has to be made to enter through that door. However, that message has to enter with such spirituality that the door does not get shut.

I am left perplexed and I also feel very sad that this entire incident has been obliterated from the Bible. It becomes crystal clear who has written the Bible [man] and who has revealed the

Qur'ân [Allâh ﷻ]. Yûsuf ﷺ knew fully well how much those prisoners would be able to bear. He therefore said just that much. A sick person desires that the medication for his illness be given to him quickly. Yûsuf ﷺ therefore said:

قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا

"He said: 'The food which you receive daily will not reach you but I would have given you the interpretation thereof before it [food] comes to you.'"

This is the tranquilliser that the addressee needs. He wants to know whether he can get the medication or not. Whether he can get it quickly or not. Together with this, Yûsuf ﷺ gave them an explanation of *tauhîd*.

The story of Mûsâ ﷺ and Khidar ﷺ and the value of îmân

فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ ۙ قَالَ أَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ۗ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُّكْرًا..... وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِينَا أَن يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا. فَأَرَدْنَا أَن يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا.

"Then the two proceeded till when they met a boy, he killed him. [Mûsâ] said: 'Have you killed an innocent soul without retaliation for another soul? Indeed you have done a senseless thing.'"... "As for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared that he would subdue them by force and unbelief. We desired that their Sustainer compensates them with someone better in purity and closer in affection." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 74, 81)

I have just a few things to say. One is that if I were to take a pledge from you, I would say to you that you should keep this perception fully alive that îmân is more honoured than your own life, it is more beloved than your own life. That we should understand fully well that the îmân of our children is more beloved and more valuable than their life and their health.

I am going to prove this to you from two verses of the Qur'ân. Whenever I recite these verses, I am left perplexed. And this perplexity does not end. However, I fear, in fact I feel, that very few people have drawn a correct conclusion from this. The pious predecessors and great commentators of the Qur'ân must have certainly thought of things which we cannot even think of. However, very few readers of today are able to draw correct conclusions.

In Sûrah al-Kahf, this story is related that Khidar ﷺ took the life of a young boy. He killed this boy in the presence and in the company of a great Prophet like Mûsâ ﷺ. Mûsâ ﷺ asked him the reason for treating this child in this manner. What was his crime? What was his sin that warranted taking away his life? Khidar ﷺ replied: His parents were believers and righteous people. This child would have become a test and

tribulation for them. If he remained alive, he would have posed a danger to the îmân of his parents. In order to save them from this danger, I took away his life. Allâh ﷻ will bless them with other children."

In the entire world today, even the most open Islamic country and the Islamic country that implements the Sharî'ah the most cannot do such a thing. You all know that the mere fear that a child will pose a danger to the parents' îmân cannot be reason enough to kill that child. Let alone taking the life of a child, no other punishment can be inflicted on a child because he is not yet accountable. So the question arises over here that why did Allâh ﷻ include this incident in the Qur'ân and thereby caused it to remain alive till the resurrection? For it will be recited till the resurrection.

Allâh ﷻ did this so that people may understand that îmân has some value. Although we cannot do this today [kill a child for such a reason], it is even prohibited to do so through the Sharî'ah, it is considered to be murder – yet Allâh ﷻ is relating this incident in the Qur'ân. It is related as an act of a Prophet and his companion (who is at least a close friend of Allâh ﷻ). What is the wisdom behind this?

The wisdom behind this is that me and you should realize that îmân is that valuable item for which Khi<u>d</u>ar ﷺ (a man of great insight and piety) took the life of this child. Allâh ﷻ then related this incident to us. He protected it forever in the Qur'ân. This, so that the reader may understand that îmân is such a valuable and great thing that if anything is going to pose a danger to it, it should be removed – irrespective of how beloved it may be. However, we do not think in this manner.

This is the miraculous nature and divine inspiration of the Qur'ân that Allâh ﷻ related this incident. Mûsâ ﷺ and Khi<u>d</u>ar ﷺ went into a village and saw a wall that was on the verge of collapsing. They both felt that they were outsiders to this

village and should therefore be hosted as guests. There is indication in the Qur'ân that they may have verbally asked to be hosted. But no one in the village paid any heed to them. No one offered them any food. They remained hungry. However, Khi<u>d</u>ar ﷺ began repairing a wall that was on the verge of collapsing. You all know how difficult it is to repair a wall that is on the verge of collapsing. It is perplexing – where he must have got the cement from and how much of labour he must have put into it!??

Mûsâ ﷺ said: "It is extremely surprising. These people who did not even bother to offer us any food. Who did not even ask us if we needed any food. How can they now deserve to have this favour done to them? This wall for which they would have had to spend money and hire labourers, you repaired it yourself?!" .

Khi<u>d</u>ar ﷺ replied:

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا ۚ فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَن يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنزَهُمَا ۖ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ.

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphans in the city. Beneath it [the wall] was a treasure of theirs and their father was a righteous person. Your Sustainer willed that they should reach their age of strength and take out their buried treasure – this as a mercy of your Sustainer." (Sûrah al-Kahf, verse 82)

This wall belonged to two orphans whose father was righteous. Had this wall collapsed, the treasure that was concealed beneath it would have been exposed and people would have looted it. These orphans would have had to face poverty and they would have had nothing for themselves.

So on one hand Khi<u>d</u>ar ﷺ took away a life because it would pose a danger to îmân. On the other hand, he repaired a wall because of the virtue and merit of îmân. So let alone these orphans, even their father was a pious man. It is not known how

long ago he passed away. However, Khidar ﷺ recognized the value of this îmân. He therefore repaired the wall and put it in place. In so doing, that treasure remained concealed.

Allâh ﷻ related both these stories in the same sûrah and one after the other so that we may know the difference between îmân and *kufr*. On one hand, îmân is so valuable that the child that was to pose a threat to it was killed. On the other hand, îmân is so valuable that those orphans whose father was a righteous man – those orphans whose time had not come as yet [to benefit from that treasure], who had not reached the age of puberty as yet, who were still orphan children – but because their father was a man of îmân and a righteous person, Allâh ﷻ appreciated his îmân and therefore made arrangements for the repair of that wall. Allâh ﷻ inspired Khidar ﷺ to repair it.

I am now saying that you should understand the value of îmân. Now this order is not applicable that whoever you consider to be a danger, you take away his life. The better thing to do is that if you consider him to be a danger, you take care of him like that wall which was on the verge of collapse. In like manner, you should make your children and the forthcoming generations like that collapsing wall which was straightened. Make them firm and unyielding in their îmân.

The entire matter revolves around our minds, and our belief must accept this fact that îmân is more valuable than our life. Then instead of seeking treatment, making new clothes, worrying about their food and drink, worrying about getting the best education for them, etc. the most important thing in your mind will be to firmly embed îmân in their hearts. More necessary than their treatment, clothing, supplications, being happy at seeing them, is the protection of their îmân. That such arrangements be made that they do not lose their îmân. Remember these last words of mine: that îmân is more valuable than your own life.

The Qur'ân is a clean and clear mirror

I heard the recitation of Sûrah al-Ambiyâ' by a friend of mine. One of its admonitory verses opened the seas of numerous meanings into my heart. Allâh ﷻ says:

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ط أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ.

"We have sent to you a Book in which is your mention. What, will you not understand?" (Sûrah al-Ambiyâ', verse 10)

This verse shows us that the Qur'ân is a clean, clear, honest, loyal and dutiful mirror in which every person can see his features. He can identify his position in society. He can learn his status in the sight of Allâh ﷻ. This is because the Qur'ân describes the character and attributes of humans. It has examples of the greatest and worst of humans. فيه ذكركم – in other words, in this Book there is mention of you. Your circumstances and your attributes are in it.

This is how the *'ulamâ'* understood the Qur'ân. The scholars of the past consider the Qur'ân to be a living, talking and "full of life" Book. According to them the Qur'ân was not a book of history or a record of the past which merely concerns itself with the past and nations of the past. And which has no connection whatsoever with living people, with the changing human life, with the numerous and countless examples of humans that are found existing in every era and every time.

Our scholars of the past knew their character, attributes and internal self very well. Everything used to be in front of them. They used to gain guidance from this very Qur'ân. They used to search for their faces in this very same extraordinary book. They used to search for a true and accurate picture of their character and mannerisms. They used to find all this very easily from this Book and identify it. If any good was mentioned, they

would express their gratitude to Allâh ﷻ. If the contrary was mentioned, they would seek forgiveness and try to rectify themselves.

The story of Ahnaf ibn Qays

On reciting this verse, I remembered an incident concerning Ahnaf ibn Qays *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. He is from among the senior Tâbi'în. He is considered to be among the close companions of 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib ﷺ. He was well known for his forbearance. Despite this, when he became angry, his self-honour would cause him to go into a rage. People used to say that when Ahnaf becomes angry, 100 000 swords go into a rage with him. I read this incident in the book قيام الليل which is written by Abû 'Abdillâh Muhammad ibn an-Nasr al-Marwazî *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* (d. 275 A.H.). He was from among the senior students of Imâm Ahmad ibn Hambal *rahmatullâhi 'alayh*. It is most likely that his book was written in his city, Baghdad.

The story goes that Ahnaf ibn Qays *rahmatullâhi 'alayh* was going somewhere when he heard someone reciting this verse. He suddenly came to attention and said: "Bring me a Qur'ân so that I may search for my mention in it, I may learn with whom I am, and whom do I resemble. When he opened the Qur'ân, his eyes fell on this verse:

كَانُوْا قَلِيْلاً مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ. وَبِالأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ. وَفِيْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ.

"They used to sleep but little at night. And in the hours of dawn they used to seek forgiveness. In their wealth there was a share for the beggar and the defeated." (Sûrah adh-Dhâriyât, verses 17-19)

He then recited this verse.

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ

"Their sides remain away from their sleeping places, calling on their Sustainer with fear and longing. And they spend out of what We provided for them." (Sûrah as-Sajdah, verse 16)

He then read of a group that was described in the following way:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا

"Who spend their night before their Sustainer, prostrating and standing." (Sûrah al-Furqân, verse 64)

He then read of a group that was described in the following manner:

الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِي السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ.

"Who go on spending in prosperity and in adversity, and suppress their anger, and pardon the people. And Allâh loves the doers of good." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 134)

Thereafter, some examples came before him that were praised in the following manner:

وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ. وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"They give preference to them over their own selves even though they may be experiencing poverty. He who has been saved from the greed of his self, it is such who have achieved their goal." (Sûrah al-Hashr, verse 9)

He then read this verse:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبَائِرَ الإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ. وَالَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ، وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ.

"Those who abstain from major sins and immorality, and when they are angered, they forgive. Those who obeyed their Sustainer and established the ṣalâh, and conduct their affairs by mutual consent, and who spend some of that which We have given them." (Sûrah ash-Shûrâ, verses 37-38)

would express their gratitude to Allâh ﷻ. If the contrary was mentioned, they would seek forgiveness and try to rectify themselves.

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The story goes that Aḥnaf ibn Qays *raḥmatullâhi 'alayh* was going somewhere when he heard someone reciting this verse. He suddenly came to attention and said: "Bring me a Qur'ân so that I may search for my mention in it, I may learn with whom I am, and whom do I resemble. When he opened the Qur'ân, his eyes fell on this verse:

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"Who go on spending in prosperity and in adversity, and suppress their anger, and pardon the people. And Allâh loves the doers of good." (Sûrah Âl 'Imrân, verse 134)

Thereafter, some examples came before him that were praised in the following manner:

وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ. وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"They give preference to them over their own selves even though they may be experiencing poverty. He who has been saved from the greed of his self, it is such who have achieved their goal." (Sûrah al-Ḥashr, verse 9)

He then read this verse:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبَائِرَ الإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ. وَالَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ، وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ.

"Those who abstain from major sins and immorality, and when they are angered, they forgive. Those who obeyed their Sustainer and established the ṣalâh, and conduct their affairs by mutual consent, and who spend some of that which We have given them." (Sûrah ash-Shûrâ, verses 37-38)

He then stopped and said: "O Allâh! I do not find myself over here. He then began searching in other places. He found a group described in the following way:

إِنَّهُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ. وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ أَإِنَّا لَتَارِكُوْا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُوْنٍ.

"They were such that when it was said to them: 'There is none worthy of worship but Allâh', they used to act arrogantly They used to say: 'Shall we abandon our gods for a mad poet?'" (Sûrah as-Saffât, verses 35-36)

He then read this verse:

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوْبُ الَّذِيْنَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ.

"When the name of Allâh alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter become vexed. And when the name of those other than Him is mentioned, they rejoice." (Sûrah az-Zumar, verse 45)

He then read of those people who will be questioned:

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِيْ سَقَرَ. قَالُوْا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّيْنَ. وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِيْنَ. وَكُنَّا نَخُوْضُ مَعَ الْخَآئِضِيْنَ. وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ. حَتَّى أَتَانَا الْيَقِيْنُ.

"What has caused you to fall into hell? They will reply: 'We were not of those who offered the salâh. Nor did we feed the needy. We used to indulge in [vain] discussions with those who used to indulge therein. We used to reject the day of recompense until the inevitable came to us.'" (Sûrah al-Muddaththir, verses 42-47)

He then stopped and said: "O Allâh! I absolve myself from these people." He then continued turning the pages of the Qur'ân and continued searching. When his eyes fell on the following verse:

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"Of people is he whose speech about matters of this worldly life pleases you and he makes Allah a witness to what is in his heart, and he is extremely quarrelsome. When he turns away from you, he speeds through the land so that he may make mischief therein and destroy crops and lives. And Allâh dislikes corruption. When he is told: 'Fear Allâh', arrogance prompts him to sin; so enough for him is hell, and indeed it is an evil abode." (Sûrah al-Baqarah, verses 204-206)

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He then stopped and said: "O Allâh! I do not find myself over here. He then began searching in other places. He found a group described in the following way:

إِنَّهُمْ إِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ لاَ إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ. وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ أَإِنَّا لَتَارِكُوْا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُوْنٍ.

"They were such that when it was said to them: 'There is none worthy of worship but Allâh', they used to act arrogantly They used to say: 'Shall we abandon our gods for a mad poet?'" (Sûrah as-Sâffât, verses 35-36)

He then read this verse:

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوْبُ الَّذِيْنَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ.

"When the name of Allâh alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter become vexed. And when the name of those other than Him is mentioned, they rejoice." (Sûrah az-Zumar, verse 45)

He then read of those people who will be questioned:

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِيْ سَقَرَ. قَالُوْا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّيْنَ. وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِيْنَ. وَكُنَّا نَخُوْضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِيْنَ. وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ. حَتّٰى أَتَانَا الْيَقِيْنُ.

"What has caused you to fall into hell? They will reply: 'We were not of those who offered the salâh. Nor did we feed the needy. We used to indulge in [vain] discussions with those who used to indulge therein. We used to reject the day of recompense until the inevitable came to us.'" (Sûrah al-Muddaththir, verses 42-47)

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"O believers! Whoever among you turns away from his religion, Allâh shall soon bring a people whom Allâh loves, and they love Him - soft-hearted to the Muslims, stern towards the unbelievers. They fight in the path of Allâh and do not fear being censured by anyone. This is the bounty of Allâh - He shall give it to whomever He wills. And Allâh is bountiful, knowing." (Sûrah al-Mâ'idah, verse 54)

Another group is described as follows:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلاً.

"Of the believers are many men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allâh; some of them have fulfilled their obligation and some of them are still waiting, without having changed [their resolve] in the least." (Sûrah al-Ahzâb, verse 23)

The Qur'ân makes mention of those who follow it while encouraging them towards gratitude and giving thanks. It also reprimands those who are ungrateful, who are unappreciative, who are arrogant, who reply good with evil, and warns them of their evil destiny.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ بَدَّلُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ كُفْرًا وَّأَحَلُّوْا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

"Have you not seen those people who changed the favour of Allâh with ingratitude and caused their people to settle in the place of destruction?"

Allâh ﷻ gives an example of this by way of a village which rejected the favours and bounties of Allâh ﷻ, and whose residents exulted in their prosperity.

وَضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلاً قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَّأْتِيْهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوْعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ.

"Allâh sets forth the parable of a village which was safe and secure. Its sustenance was coming to it freely from all places. But then it was ungrateful to the bounties of Allâh. So Allâh made it to taste the garments of hunger and fear on account of what they used to do." (Sûrah an-Nahl, verse 112)

These are the different human and moral examples which the Qur'ân presented under different names. At times it makes mention of an absolutely disobedient and arrogant person, e.g. Pharoah. At times, by the name of a rebellious minister, e.g. Hâmân. At times, by the name of a proud and miserly capitalist like Qârûn. At times, by the name of an oppressive and tyrannical nation like the 'Âd. At times, by the name of a famous and expert artisan nation like the Thamûd. These are all eternal examples of humanity which are not confined to a particular era or place. All these examples portray different aspects of human nature and human weaknesses.

The Qur'ân also sheds light on the fate of these nations and communities. It categorically states that those who follow in their footsteps and accept them as their guides and leaders will also face the same fate.

سُنَّةَ اللهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ. وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرًا

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maulânâ Abul Hasan ‘Alî Nadwî rahmatullâ ‘alayh was born in 1914 in India. He was one of the most famous Islamic scholars of our time. He was a prolific writer and a great orator in both the Arabic and Urdu languages. These are some of his accolades.

He wrote numerous books on a variety of Islamic themes - both in Arabic and Urdu. Many of these have been translated into the English, Hindi, Turkish and Malaysian languages. His most famous written works are: Saviours of Islamic Spirit, Islam and the World, the Life of Sayyid Ahmed Shahid, Stories of the Prophets, The Mercy to the Worlds, and various other set works and booklets.

The learned Maulânâ passed away on 22 Ramdân 1420 A.H. corresponding with 31 December 1999.